

# IRELAND TO-DAY

SOCIAL • ECONOMIC • NATIONAL • CULTURAL

FEBRUARY 1937

VOL. 2 NO. 2

## CONTENTS

EDITORIAL .. ..	IRELAND TO-DAY	1
FOREIGN COMMENTARY I. ..	MICHAEL O'NEILL-KING	4
FOREIGN COMMENTARY II. ..	OWEN S. SKEFFINGTON	7
<i>Poem</i> : KALLIKLES .. ..	BRIAN COFFEY	10
ADMINISTRATION IN IRELAND ..	ARTHUR W. BROMAGE	11
IRISH IN THE SCHOOLS ..	MYLES DILLON	19
SACK OF THE ABBEY ..	SEAN O MEADHRA	25
THE SURVIVAL OF DEMOCRACY ..	T. WILSON	33
<i>Poems</i> : THE TOLERANCE OF CROWS	CHARLES DONNELLY	
23RD INST. .. ..	EILEEN BRENNAN	50
<i>Short Story</i> : FOG .. ..	EDWARD SHEEHY	51
ART: SURREALISM .. ..	JOHN DOWLING	60
EXHIBITION OF INTERNATIONAL		
ARCHITECTURE .. ..	EOGHAN D. BUCKLEY	62
MUSIC: THE ORCHESTRA II. ..	EAMONN O GALLCHOBHAIR	64
THEATRE: BRANDS—PLUCKED FROM THE		
BURNING .. ..	SEAN O MEADHRA	66
FILM: PORTRAITS AND SPECTACLE ..	LIAM O LAOGHAIRE	69
BOOK SECTION:		
<i>Introductory</i> : ART AND SOCIETY ..	EDWARD SHEEHY	72
<i>Reviews by</i> SEAN O FAOLAIN, SEAMUS PENDER, H. SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON, A. E. MALONE, DONAGH MACDONAGH, LIAM O LAOGHAIRE, PETER O'DONOVAN, LAURENCE J. ROSS, FLANNAN O'FLAHERTY, SEAN O MEADHRA and others.		
THE MONTH IN RETROSPECT ..	DENIS BARRY	84

*Cover Design by* SEAN O'SULLIVAN, R.H.A.

The copyright and all rights of reproduction and translation of articles published in IRELAND TO-DAY are reserved by the Proprietors.

Responsibility for the statements in the articles in IRELAND TO-DAY attaches only to the writers.

The Editors will gladly consider for publication articles, short stories or poems. In the event of unsuitability, every effort will be made to return MSS. if a stamped addressed envelope be provided.

Single copies—monthly, 1/-; post paid, 1/4. Prepaid subscriptions: 14/6 per annum; 7/3, six months; 3/9, three months, post free.

All communications to be addressed to the Editorial and Publishing Offices, 49 Stafford Street, Dublin.

ONE SHILLING

## NOTES ON OUR CONTRIBUTORS

MICHAEL O'NEILL-KING, Ph.D., comes of a family long associated with the U.S. Diplomatic Service.

BRIAN COFFEY, M.Sc., needs no introduction for this further contribution to Ireland To-Day.

ARTHUR W. BROMAGE, Ph.D. of Harvard, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan; author of American County Government and State Government and Administration in the United States. Spent winter months in Ireland.

MYLES DILLON, Lecturer in Comparative Philology and Sanskrit, University College, Dublin; Secretary for Irish Studies, Royal Irish Academy.

SEAN O'MEADHRA, already known to readers for his conduct of our monthly review of the drama.

T. WILSON, a brilliant student in the School of Economics and Politics of Queen's University, Belfast.

EILEEN BRENNAN, grand-daughter of a well-known Cork ballad-maker of Fenian days. Appeared recently in two anthologies.

CHARLES DONNELLY, is here a poet looking at modern warfare.

EDWARD SHEEHY, M.A., editor of the monthly Book Section.

EOGHAN D. BUCKLEY, B.Arch., M.R.I.A.I., President of the Architectural Graduates' Association for the coming year.

---

---

The regular features are conducted by the Editors of the several sections

<i>Foreign Commentary</i>	..	OWEN S. SKEFFINGTON, B.A., D.PH.
<i>Art</i> .. ..	..	JOHN DOWLING, B.A., B.D.S.
<i>Music</i> .. ..	..	EAMONN O GALLCHOBHAIR
<i>Theatre</i> .. ..	..	SEAN O MEADHRA
<i>Film</i> .. ..	..	LIAM O LAOGHAIRE
<i>Books</i> .. ..	..	EDWARD SHEEHY, M.A.



## EDITORIAL

WE hold the view that the present Government in Dublin, inaugurated with resonance of trumpet and welcomed by a jaded, disillusioned people, found itself quickly frustrated in most of its intentions by the changeless machine and compelled, therefore, in later years, to smoke-screen their inactivity in other, more vital directions, by incessantly emphasising their industrial development programme.

Nevertheless, we should be churlish did we not acknowledge the value of the address of the Minister for Industry and Commerce to the Federation of Industries when, we think for the first time, the public were permitted to get a glimpse into the Government's mind on some of the more fundamental aspects of that development. The difficulties of the artificial re-creation of industry was well exemplified in the shoe trade, where boot manufacture from imported leather had to precede the re-establishment of tanneries, which subsequently were faced with resistance from the leather-importing groups. Another point ably brought out was the function of design in industry, which echoed fully a thesis put forward in an article entitled "Art and Industry" in our last number.

●

We were glad when the same speaker referred to the necessity for the imported technician as we had intended sooner or later ourselves to suggest a somewhat more dignified organization than exists for the securing of suitable employment for University graduates. The Minister's words will adequately represent our views for the moment. He stated that he had "no sympathy whatever with the view that the possession of a University degree or some similar qualification entitles its holder to be considered at once capable of acting as managing director of an important industrial undertaking," and, further, that he knew "that a campaign conducted from a particular quarter on this subject has, by its very unreasonableness, done real damage to proper progress by arousing hostility to the general idea."

●

In the more directly political sphere, the conversations between the President of the Executive Council of the Twenty-six Counties Government and the British Minister for the

Dominions stirred a flutter of optimism to which the only vocal opposition was a bellow that might be translated as "not an inch" from the Premier of the Six counties Government. That more practical people north and south of the "boundary" are thinking and planning in terms of unity, becomes daily more apparent. In our immediate sphere, Belfast takes an increasing interest in IRELAND TO-DAY, which is becoming recognized as the only Irish cultural magazine and, therefore, of necessity, to be supported.

●

We have often chafed under the restraint of not criticizing our Irish broadcasts, and if there is one concrete charge which might be made, it is that at least a judicious selection of gramophone records might raise the level of certain very weak half-hours, and that pandering to "requests" of dubious inspiration, is simply an evasion of the responsibility that is, or should, be assumed on appointment, by the official concerned. Having said so much, it is with pleasure we learn of the systematic schools' broadcasts, the programme of which, up to June next, has just reached us. It is on the right lines, exhibits thought and care in its arrangement, and is, it is hoped, a harbinger of better things to come.

●

For the sake of one of the too few spiritual qualities upon which we can pride ourselves, namely, our charity and tolerance, it is to be hoped that a fuller meeting of the Dublin County Council will rescind the resolution, recently shamefully proposed and rather shamefastly passed, which withdrew the special slaughter-house facilities afforded, originally conceded out of respect for Jewish susceptibilities and in conformity with Jewish rites. Professor Howley, of Galway University, made a brief but adequate protest, which we hope will be followed by the desired action.

●

If we have truck with these things, if we lie down with the yoke, if we accept the dictatorship of ignorance, then will "a black and savage atrocity of mind" descend upon us. Burke, the author of that phrase, said that "of all things, wisdom is the most terrified with epidemical fanaticism, because of all enemies it is that against which she is the least able to furnish any kind of resource." This is the terror that is ahead of us in this country unless it is resisted now before it wins to power.



The word "Communism," for instance, is threatening to be a national bogey. It has ceased to be a word—it is a notched stick for belabouring your opponents.

●

Now, we have had the evidence of the police authorities and the Government that any "Communism" in Ireland is so negligible that it may be said to be non-existent. Such unexceptionable authorities as Most Rev. Dr. Cohalan and Professor Tierney, who weigh words carefully, have recently written the following—respectively:—" . . . there does not appear to be any ground for fear of a Communistic invasion of Ireland" and "'reformist' Socialism, which minimises class-warfare and compromises with traditional religion is not Marxism at all." We had always held not, but we strongly suspect that the real enemy being laid is reformist socialism or nationalization or any disruption whatever of the *status quo* of imperialistic capitalism. And we suspect further that the whole artificially inflamed scare of communism in this country is a carefully-planned tactical diversion whilst big gun emplacements of Fascism are being posted in our midst. Communism, as a philosophy transferring to the State the attributes of, and the homage due to, a Deity, will never gain entry into Ireland.

●

What of Fascism? We wish we could wholly accept Father Martindale's assurance in the January number of the *Irish Monthly*, having first made the surprising statement that "The Church will increasingly be identified with Fascism," that "I cannot very well picture a Fascist Ireland." It is not without significance that Dr. Gurian, after his authoritative and, of course, destructive analysis of Bolshevism, should now have trained his guns on Fascism, which has virtually declared the Church to be Public Enemy No. 2. Cardinal Faulhaber, familiar to economic students here as our introduction to Raffeisen banks, the forerunner of our agricultural credit system, has painted a vivid, if depressing, picture of His Holiness the Pope, of Fascism in action. Everywhere recently a note of doubt is discernible. We are now much more definitely assured that Spain will not be Communist with Government victory than that Spain will *not* be fascist in the eventuality of a Franco victory.

## FOREIGN COMMENTARY I

THE development of the Spanish Civil War has brought into high relief the general aims and aspirations of most of the Great Powers. Great Britain has again emphasised her satisfaction with the status quo, declaring that she desires to see an integral Spain when the struggle ends; such integrity, in the British sense, would presumably cover the economic interests of her subjects as represented, e.g., by the Rio Tinto mines. Russia's obvious pre-occupation is the eventual success of the Government Party as most nearly representing that form of rule for whose extension a special section of the Soviet Government still exists. Good Russian politics are, however, on this occasion, associated with material interest: Russia would receive from a victorious Government Party definite advantages in the way of an acknowledged sphere of influence in a "hot water" sea vital to her trade; and rumour has indicated the possibility of her getting definite economic concessions. Germany's motives for intervention are cogent: a successful Franco, while in all probability, by his practice, providing Hitler's speeches with another example of the desirability of the totalitarian régime, would prove a distraction to France, still the German bogeyman; would give Hitler a base in the Mediterranean and claims to have his views considered in all problems touching that sea; and would, by the absorption of German technicians, and the accomodating provision of some (coal, iron, copper) of those raw materials repeatedly defined by the Propaganda Ministry as essential to Germany's life, considerably strengthen the Fatherland's economic system. France, hitherto fairly successful in giving the official impression of indifference to the outcome of the war, is interested in that a hostile Spain would be strategically a disadvantage in regard to her land frontier and the disposition of her available fleet. We may take Mussolini at his word and believe that he would not, under any circumstances, tolerate a bolshevist power on his left flank. In any event the outcome of the struggle is bound considerably to affect Italy (with her North African colonies) and every other Mediterranean state; to Mussolini, too, the question of raw materials is of importance. For the rest, America's attitude towards Europe and war in general has, as a result of the Spanish conflict, been more clearly defined as a wish for complete isolation; except by Presidential decree, she will not, in future, permit the supply of materials or men to either com-



batant. The British have, in following America's lead as regards restriction of recruiting, sought to prevail on Europe to follow. The application by Great Britain of the act of 1870 to recruiting for the war seems to imply recognition of the belligerency of both sides. If that is so, it may have far-reaching consequences and considerable influence on the further course of the struggle. The question of a general "pacific" blockade, in all likelihood already discussed by France and Great Britain, may be raised by one or the other of those powers at the next League Council meeting.

\* \* \*

The New Year brought with it, in the Anglo-Italian declaration, a clarification of the general Mediterranean situation: the notes attached to the formal document contained a repetition of the assurances given to Britain in December that Italy did not seek possession of the Balearic Islands. Apart from its specific contents the declaration may be taken, in some respects, as indicating a reversal on the part of Italy of its Mediterranean and general policy of the past year in return for the de facto recognition by the British Government in December of the Abyssinian conquest. The clearing up of the remnants of the Abyssinian dispute would again seem likely to alter the relations of Germany and Italy as manifested in the agreements of the summer and autumn of 1936. However, the Austro-German agreement of July last has radically changed Italy's role in Central Europe, from that of prime defender of Austrian independence to that of any big power struggling for control. The extent to which Europe will continue to rotate on the Rome-Berlin "axis" will largely depend on the outcome of the conversations between Goering and Mussolini.

\* \* \*

The reports, apparently premature of the landing of German troops, officials and engineers in Spanish Morocco excited in France and Great Britain a natural trepidation in view of the constant harping by official Germany over the past three months on the necessity for the return of some, at least, of her former colonies. It has, of course, been proved to the satisfaction of the "have" powers that Germany has no claim to such treatment, that it would be immediately fatal to the natives of the territories concerned and that the economic grounds put forward by Germany in favour of her request are unsound. The Germans have not been convinced by these arguments. The first two are certainly not proved, the third is based on a

degree of special pleading which, if its motive were not so obvious, would be thought impossible. That Germany's trade with her former colonies was in pre-war days small may be true. Nevertheless Germany is nowadays far from being in the strong position which she then occupied for buying abroad when and where she chose. Her willingness to buy is not any less, but her utter inability to do so freely is patent from the ingenious and diverse methods she has employed in recent years to get a supply of the most elementary necessities.

Apart from economic considerations, however, prestige has played a very considerable and probably unusually large part in all German foreign policy of the past two years. It is obvious that Hitler's rise to power was mainly based on his external programme. Spanish Morocco as a German sphere of interference would satisfy both motives of German policy. France's interest in that region is, however, of the keenest. At the same time her attention is, at present, partially diverted by events at the other end of the Mediterranean, where Turkey is showing a lively interest in the fate of the Sanjak of Alexandretta, a narrow strip of territory at the North West corner of Syria. Its chief town, Alexandretta, in addition to controlling the Cilician Gates, the coast route from Asia Minor to the South, is the best natural harbour on the Syrian coast, and a clearing station for the produce of a large hinterland. Of the 220,000 inhabitants of the Sanjak, 85,000 are Turks, about 55,000 Arab, and a large proportion of the remainder Armenian. The area has formed, since 1921, an autonomous province in Syria for whose administration France, as mandatory, must account to the League of Nations. The present trouble has arisen from the fact that in September of last year France, following the British example in Irak, concluded a treaty with Syria which, while safeguarding French influence, provided for the independence of that country at the end of a period of three years. The Turks fear that, if left to the mercies of an independent Syria, perhaps suffering from an attack of the Pan-Arabian ideal, their fellow-countrymen in the Sanjak will not fare well. At the moment three observers from the League Council are in the region, charged with furnishing a report before the end of the present month. Kemal Ataturk's swift visit to the South in the second week of January caused a considerable stir. Diplomatic negotiations between France and Turkey are, however, being continued, and seem likely to reach a pacific solution.

MICHAEL O'NEILL-KING



## FOREIGN COMMENTARY II

It is somewhat baffling to read Franco's latest pronouncements. He refers to his "dilemma" about the attack on Madrid. It now transpires that it was not really so much for humanitarian reasons, nor yet on account of the rain and fog, that Madrid has not so far been taken. It seems that it is all due to the tactics of the Madrid Government. Now some of us had half suspected this, but not perhaps in the way that Franco means; for he is quite petulant about the matter, and insinuates that the vast numbers of civilians still remaining in Madrid are compelled to do so by the fiendish Reds. This, however, may be categorically denied, for the *Edinburgh Catholic Herald* assures us that the population of Madrid is "anxious to remain to welcome Franco." Meanwhile, the issue of the *Independent*, which triumphantly announced, some months ago, the "taking of Madrid" (inset Franco the Victor) has attained quite a high value as a curio.

\* \* \*

It has before been suggested here that the price of agreement with a fascist state was to become fascist. This would seem to be borne out by the German and Italian replies to the Franco-British proposals for banning volunteers. The Fascist states would be willing to consider these suggestions if France, Britain and all the other nations would agree to prohibit all public meetings, discussions or demonstrations in favour of either side in Spain. In other words, to come to terms with the fascist states the democratic countries would have to agree to muzzle public opinion and the press in approved fascist style. Of course, Germany and Italy do not imagine that France and Britain will set about doing this. It is simply their way of indicating that it would greatly assist them in arriving at an agreement with the other nations, if these would take the first steps towards fascism.

If any proof were needed that the Italian "volunteers" in Franco's army are there with the approval and encouragement of the Italian Government, it is only necessary to observe that, while a considerable number of Italians have been rounded up and accused of trying to leave Italy in order to help the Madrid Government, as yet no Italian has been charged with trying to run away to help Franco. Evidently the very fact of trying to leave Italy without permission shows that one is bound for Madrid; the thousands of Italians fighting for Franco were not so foolish as to go without permission. Why should they?

The *Osservatore Romano* is frequently quoted in some of our dailies and referred to as "the mouthpiece of the Vatican." The following passage has not yet been cited, however, for some reason :—

"The situation in Spain, with due regard to the recent revolt, must be viewed in the following light :—In exercising its strict legality, the Spanish Government is not only in its right, but has carried out its duty. The nation has a right to be protected by its Government. By failing to fulfil its duty of punishing the rebels most severely, the Government would have assumed for itself the responsibility of having prolonged the bloodshed. . . . This is the true doctrine of the Catholic Church in its relations with lay Governments. The duty of the legal Government to crush all revolts is indisputable, and all Catholics who are obedient to the wishes of their Church must uphold the Government in its struggle against *all kinds of revolts*."

So strikingly different is this in tendency from the type of quotation from this unofficial Vatican organ with which the Irish public is familiar, that some of my readers may feel tempted to question its authenticity. Yet the only change which I have made therein is the addition of the italics. Possibly the incredulous will find it much easier to believe this passage genuine when they hear that it was printed in 1934, and referred to the crushing by the reactionary Government, with the aid of the Foreign Legion, of the miners' rising in the Asturias. That this fact should affect the credibility of the quotation is not without its significance.

\* \* \*

With the rumours of a German occupation of Spanish Morocco, world opinion is again playing with the idea of giving back the ex-German colonies. To do so would be to run the risk of earning Hitler's censure, for he assures us in *Mein Kampf* that Bismarck was right, that it has been a fatal mistake on Germany's part to aim at Colonial expansion, and that her natural path lies eastwards, where she could settle hundreds of thousands of Germans. True, Hitler does not to-day overstress his hostility to the gaining of African colonies. It is, however, worth recalling, in this connection, the words of General Smuts in 1918 : "German colonial aims are really not colonial, but are dominated by far-reaching conceptions of world politics. Not colonies, but military power and strategic position for exercising world power in future, are her real aims." Such a possibility must necessarily occur to one, when it is realised that the port of Ceuta in Spanish Morocco might well be turned into a base for warships and aeroplanes, which would seriously diminish the value of Gibraltar. As a result, England is found to be far more alert and ready to prevent such a German invasion of Morocco than ever she was to stop a similar one of Spain.



The whole question of colonies is worthy of considerable study in the light of the growing conviction in the minds of many that a colony may constitute a substantial annual loss to the "mother country," while bringing in a considerable profit to a handful of private "kings" of rubber, tea or cotton. The probability of a peaceful settlement of the Alexandretta affair is due to the fact that Blum's Government has no special reverence for the vested interest, but a very definite concern for the welfare of the human elements involved. It will be surprising if a peaceful agreement with the Turkish Government is not achieved. In many of the British colonies it is becoming increasingly clear, however, that the vested interest is considered before the welfare of the native or the purse of the home taxpayer. It is very questionable, for instance, whether the money spent in the defence of Assam, and in the maintenance of law and order, is of very much value to the British nation. The tea companies, however, are doubtless grateful for the money Britain yearly spends in order that their dividends be maintained, and that "unrest" among the native workers be quelled without too much inconvenience or loss to private companies. And so people are growing sceptical about Germany's "colony starvation," and their scepticism is not lessened when they learn the infinitesimal quantity of raw materials imported from her colonies by Germany before the war. Then, too, in thirty years Germany succeeded in settling twenty thousand Germans in her colonies. Not a very radical solution to the "surplus population" problem. It is instructive to note, also, that the number of Germans in the now ex-German colonies has diminished very little since pre-war days. Further, Switzerland seems to get along very nicely without any colonies, while Belgium, with one of the biggest colonial empires, in proportion to the home country, could hardly be cited as one of the world's most prosperous nations. Nor could it be said that her over-"populaton" was much alleviated by the fact that 11,000 Belgians reside in the Congo (actually there are 25,000 Europeans, in all, in the Congo), nor her trade much benefited by the fact that 1 per cent. of it is with her colonial empire. No, it seems improbable that the German people, *as a whole*, would reap much benefit from colonial expansion, but some Germans might. One has difficulty, also, in accepting the view that such expansion would *really* be a contribution to world peace.

OWEN SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON

## KALLIKLES

" As if a brick had fallen on my head  
from a great height, I fell in love ;  
someone come from behind with a shove  
kicked me career and all down the water-shed.

" Stung now, I find it profits to reflect  
on the diverse things may happen to man,  
much in the way a wife must suspect  
from empty pockets another also-ran.

" I think the roses never grow so red  
as near a dye-works. And I remember  
I wanted to be a sailor. When I'm dead  
let it rain stink, if it wants, in December.

" But to continue meditating on life :  
there are a number of ways of irritating people ;  
observe the big black woman with the knife  
chasing Poe's raven up the steeple.

" You may wonder why the grass is green.  
Nothing is green but thinking makes it so.  
You may ask why even dogs do dream.  
Pray tell me what results you have to show.

" Thus, you will observe often a man set at wine  
in a four-square tavern for no better reason  
than that he saw the Silk of the Kine  
in a night-club accusing him of high treason.

" So we can all recall a time spent on sardine-oil  
when the green leaves seemed greener than usual."

" PADDY ! "

*" Love's at the door, Sir, promising turmoil ;  
I'll be going now, if you don't mind, quiet-like, casual."*

BRIAN COFFEY



## *SOME OBSERVATIONS ON ADMINISTRATION IN SAORSTAT EIREANN*

To make observations concerning the political institutions of any country is an undertaking fraught with fallibility. Lord Bryce once remarked regarding European commentaries upon America that the most common mistake was to imagine that the conditions in New York City existed everywhere else. The next most common mistake was to think that conditions in New York existed nowhere else in the United States. To-day, the most general error on the part of foreign critics of America is to visualize the States in terms of newspaper accounts of battles between police and gangsters, and in the garish light of the American cinema. Whatever the sins of omission and commission that have been made by the people in the States, they cherish many institutions and traditions, including : political democracy ; religious toleration ; freedom of speech and of the press ; and, above all, the basic concept that the state is for the individual and not the individual for the state.

The shoe of fallibility fits the other foot, too. It is often thought by Americans, for instance, that the political methods of certain Irish-American politicians in the States are common to the native Irish politicians. Again, it is a popular misconception, in certain quarters in the States, to think of Saorstát Eireann and Irish life in general as being still in the era of the " Troubles " and to fail in appreciation of the remarkable advances in stability since then. Saorstát Eireann holds, like the United States, to institutions and principles which must be preserved at all costs : political democracy ; religious toleration ; freedom of speech and of the press ; and—again—the basic concept that the state is for the individual and not the individual for the state.

When one finds in two countries agreement upon basic principles, the differences that do exist are made of minor stuff. In full recognition then of these and other common characteristics, what of the differences? On December 11, 1936, in the course of seven and one-half hours, the Dail amended the Constitution of Saorstat Eireann. President de Valera and Fianna Fail were engaged in stripping away the shreds of legal fiction which bound Saorstat Eireann *internally* to the English Crown. The President's intention had been long announced. Prompt action had to be taken upon the occasion of the abdication of Edward VIII. The Constitutional Amendment Bill of December 11th was considered by the party in power to be a necessary prelude to the Executive Authority (External Relations) Bill of December 12th. Nevertheless, a constitutional amendment in seven and one-half hours is a contradiction in terms to the American.

To amend the Constitution of the United States within a year is considered rapid-fire action. The consent of thirty-six states as well as that of the Congress must be obtained. It would, however, be more reasonable to compare the practice in individual American states with the problem in Saorstat Eireann. In general, the American states make a clear distinction between the methods to be used in making constituent and statutory laws. At the present time only one of the forty-eight states permits the legislature to amend its constitution without reference of the specific amendment to the people. In Delaware alone, two successive legislatures by a two-thirds vote may amend the state constitution without a popular referendum. In America, constitutional rigidity is a natural result, but it is considered the lesser of two evils as compared with legislative supremacy.

In Saorstat Eireann, the constitutional proviso permitting legislative amendments and the reduction of the Oireachtas to a single house placed the Irish Constitution in 1936 at the immediate mercy of the majority party in the Dail. The Oireachtas as now constituted (December, 1936) is a one-house legislature,



dear to the hearts of many political theorists. After years of agitation, Nebraska alone of the forty-eight American states has adopted a single-house assembly. But there the state legislature can be checked by a gubernatorial veto which can be overcome only by an extraordinary majority in the assembly. Further, should the legislature of Nebraska pass legislation contrary to the state constitution or to the Constitution of the United States, the courts in a specific case could declare such legislation to be null and void. The Nebraska legislature could not amend the state constitution without submitting its proposals to a popular referendum.

Compared with the one-chamber legislature of Nebraska, the Dail is sovereign. The parliamentary majority in the Dail alone can "up" articles and "down" sections of the fundamental law. Will transient majorities continue to wield such power in Saorstát Éireann? Apparently not, for the same government which abolished the old Senate for reasons not inherent in the two-house system has had a commission to report on a new Senate. The President's speech at the 1936 Ard-Fheis of Fianna Fáil intimated that a new upper house would be a part of the new Constitution. It would be a simple matter to entrust a new Senate with the authority to require the submission of constitutional changes to a referendum in the event of disagreement between it and the Dail. This would establish a distinction between the methods used in making constitutional and statutory law and should tend to stabilize constitutional law. Cannot Saorstát Éireann afford a more stable constitutional system after the experimental years are done, and after a new constitution has been drafted "as though England were a million miles away?" The alternative is for the constitution to remain as a football of party politics.

A sovereign one-house legislature possessing power to amend a constitution presupposes a succession of majority parties having parliamentary forbearance, legislative skill, and amazing insight into the popular will. These good qualities may appear at any

given moment, and then again they may not. It is in view of the "may not" that checks and balances have been used to so great an extent in America, even perhaps to too great an extent. In the United States the trend over a long period of years has been in favour of checks on legislative authority. In Saorstát Éireann the emergence of the legislative supremacy of the Dáil is apparent. Both policies, when carried to extremes, may lead to grief.

In the enforcement of law and order, many divergencies appear between the United States and Saorstát Éireann. The backbone of American police administration is the local force—municipal police in the cities and sheriffs in the counties. Supplementary to these basic forces, but not supplanting them, are first, the state police organizations, and second, the federal police. Saorstát Éireann has none of the American problems arising out of a welter of police jurisdictions, diverse racial strains, and enormous geographical extent. Ordinary crime is not a pressing problem in Irish life. It remains largely a matter between the individual and the state. Organized, high-powered, criminal gangs which America inherited from the Prohibition era have no counterpart in Saorstát Éireann. On the other hand, the United States has no parallel to the Public Safety Acts and the Military Tribunal in the Saorstát.

Saorstát Éireann is fortunate in having an appointed judiciary. Although the federal judiciary in America is an appointed one, about three-fourths of the states elect all or most of their judges. Although the evils of an elective judiciary are well known to Americans, the inheritance of frontier traditions and the rigidity of state constitutions perpetuate the existing system in many states. The Irish judge clearly dominates the trial of a case, not the barristers, which is not always true in American courts. Many of the forty-eight states have gone so far as to prohibit the judge from commenting upon the evidence when making his charge to the jury. This rule has the undesirable effect of depriving the jury of advice which is, often enough,



sorely needed. In Saorstát Éireann, in contrast to some of the states of the American federal system, the jury and the bar-risters are cast in their proper roles, and the judge emerges as the predominant force.

One of the clues to Irish public administration is the traditional security of tenure of civil servants. The exceptions and the stir which they create serve to emphasize the rule. The introduction of the Local Appointments Commission in 1926 assured the selection of competent administrative personnel for local governmental units. If this policy is maintained for a generation, it should revolutionize Irish local administration. The use of a central agency to recommend to city and county councils the appointment of specific candidates to high administrative posts has no exact parallel in the United States. The local units of government there are under the control of the respective forty-eight states. None of the states has a system of central appointment of local executive officers like that of the Saorstát. For that matter, none of the forty-eight states has a department with the comprehensive authority which the Department of Local Government and Public Health wields over local units in the Saorstát. There has been a good deal of talk in America about the importance of creating state departments of local government and of entrusting to them a considerable measure of administrative control over local governments.

The states, for the most part, leave the local units a free hand in selecting their personnel. The cities in America are pursuing the policy of using civil service systems, but the counties are run on the spoils system. Only two states, Massachusetts and New Jersey, exercise a direct part in selecting civil servants for local units. However, their efforts are in the direction of providing a civil service programme for local personnel in general, and not for the selection of higher administrative officers. After all government may be an art, but administration is a science, and administration can only be improved by

treating executive posts in local units as professional jobs. The importance attached in Saorstát Éireann to professional qualifications for local executive positions is admirable. Americans may well take note of the Local Appointments Commission's use of the oral interview for candidates and the care used to see that the members of selection boards and the candidates meet together for the first time only on the day appointed.

Introduction of the city manager plan in Ireland is a modern step. The development of this scheme of local administration for Cork, Dublin, Dun Laoghaire, and Limerick, places Saorstát Éireann in a category with the United States and Canada as countries using the manager plan. The American city manager plan is not identical with the Irish. In the United States some 440 cities have the manager plan, but the manager is appointed by, and may be removed by, the city council. In Saorstát Éireann the machinery of the Local Appointments Commission has been applied to the post of manager, and the consent of the Minister for Local Government and Public Health is necessary for a removal. This puts the manager in a firm position and prevents the political removals which sometimes are made in American cities. On the other hand, the Irish manager plan does reserve to the corporation councils the fundamental power to strike the rate and to pass bye-laws. The Irish councils possess many of the basic powers enjoyed by American councils. In spite of the legal divorce in powers between Irish managers and councils there seems to be a good deal of informal give-and-take between these two agencies. The managers have wisely pursued a policy of consulting and placating city councils. At the same time the councils in the Irish managerial cities have no authority to meddle in administrative detail, and this is sound public policy.

In general, the Irish city councils serve as admirable sounding boards from which public opinion may be carried into managerial offices. The old-style corporation council seeking to exercise detailed control over administration was at a distinct



disadvantage. The city manager plan remedied this by entrusting administration to the supervision of a professional civil servant, while broad policies were left ultimately in the hands of the council. The most pronounced contrast between the American and Irish manager plans lies in the respective positions of the managers. Under the American system, it is possible that a highly efficient public servant serving as manager be dismissed by a council for political reasons. This is not a general practice, but it can and does, on occasion, happen. The Irish system has buttressed the position of the manager against this very thing.

The most pronounced similarity between the two plans lies in the long-term planning of municipal affairs in contradistinction to day-to-day footwork in administrative routine. The American manager plan has been notable for the extensive public works undertaken. The same tendency is exhibited by Irish managers. In Saorstát Éireann the improvements in public works vary from city to city, but official reports show the general advance. The Irish city manager works in a civilization which is less fluid than the American. In it, changes are made more slowly than in the American city. On the other hand, in some matters such as housing, the Irish city appears to be definitely ahead in its accomplishments.

American counties, like Irish administrative counties, have manifested opposition to the manager plan. This recalcitrance (if such it may be called) seems to be natural in rural areas. The cities succumb readily enough to the concentration of administrative authority in a manager. The counties, controlled by the more individualistic philosophy of the rural-dweller, are propelled more slowly to accept concentrated authority in any form. Another way of looking at it is that village-pump politics survive in a more virulent form in counties. In America, only a half-dozen counties have managers in contrast to some 440 managerial cities. In Saorstát Éireann the attitude of many delegates to the 1936 Ard-Fheis of Fianna Fáil was

that of opposition to any attempt further to deprive local units of local self-government. This attitude is typical of opposition to managerial government. I do not believe that it is sound, for in the long run managerial government works for the best interests of a locality or it fails in its purpose. Nevertheless, the manager plan runs counter to "politics" in the American sense of the word, and hence the opposition of rural areas to the managerial system.

ARTHUR W. BROMAGE



## IRISH IN THE SCHOOLS

THE national effort to restore the Irish language is concentrated on the schools, both primary and secondary, and it is of great importance that the end for which we are working should be clearly seen and appreciated. It is apparent that this is not so, and that there is a wide divergence of views, and, what is worse, a good deal of confusion with regard to it. A definite direction is necessary so that the work of the schools may be successful, and that the primary and secondary schools and the universities may work together.

The declared purpose of the Gaelic League has been the propagation of the spoken language, and its classes have been conducted with great success towards that end. There must be hundreds of fluent speakers who owe their proficiency to it. And it is sometimes said that with the schools under Irish control, the teaching work of the Gaelic League should pass to them, and the League confine itself to propaganda. This raises the question as to what should be the object of Irish studies in the schools, and generally speaking it may be answered in two ways. Some say that it is the duty of the schools to make fluent Irish speakers at all costs, and even to use Irish as a medium of instruction outside as well as within the Gaeltacht. Infant classes are now conducted solely in Irish where neither pupils nor teacher are native speakers. According to this view there is no difference between the objects of the Gaelic League and those of the school. Others will hold that Irish should be taught in the schools as an educational subject like any other, and that to an Irish boy its educational value may be very great.

The first of these two points of view leads to the contention that we learn Irish simply for the sake of learning it, and that we should not ask whether, once mastered, it will introduce us

to any literature or any life worth knowing. That is not an opinion to be dismissed at once as absurd. The heart has its reasons, and the feeling is strong in most of us that it is right that we should know Irish and speak it as fluently as possible. But it is at least a dangerous position in which to fix oneself. It is a reserve trench, far behind the front of the line, and means yielding ground unnecessarily to those who honestly believe that all this teaching of Irish is a mistake and a waste of time.

Obviously the second point of view claims the attention of the teacher of Irish. He is working beside men who teach Latin or French or English or history or mathematics, and who have all the treasure of literature and history, and the discipline of grammar and mathematics at their disposal; and too often, as things are at present, he must feel ashamed of the contrast between their work and his. He is expected to read some trivial story with his class, which neither he nor any of his pupils would ever read if it were not that it is written in Irish. The class may find Livy difficult and Racine rather dull, but they will at least respect them. When Irish comes round, here, they feel, is mere foolishness, and they relapse into indifference. A native speaker once, on being reproached for not practising his Irish, said: "Sure, there's nothing in Irish only the devil in a bag!"

It is the first point of view stated above which at present dominates the conduct of Irish studies in primary and secondary school, so that one is justified in stating the case for the second.

Professor Whitehead, in a recent essay on *The Place of Classics in Education* ("The Aims of Education," p. 93) says with admirable candour:—

"In the past classics reigned throughout the whole sphere of higher education . . . there was a classical tone in all learned walks of life, so that aptitude for classics was a synonym for ability, and finally every boy who gave the slightest promise in that direction cultivated his natural or acquired interest in classical learning. All this is gone and gone for ever. . . . The situation is dominated by the fact that in the future ninety per cent. of the



pupils who leave school at the age of eighteen will never again read a classical book in the original. In the case of pupils leaving at an earlier age, the estimate of ninety per cent. may be changed to one of ninety-nine per cent. . . . We have got to produce a defence of classics which applies to this ninety per cent. of the pupils."

The professor goes on to make a claim for Latin as a training in logic, philosophy, history and aesthetic appreciation. Latin is presented as a training in logic by the frequent exercise of expressing the sense of English sentences in Latin and of turning Latin prose and verse into good English ; in philosophy by the contact with a different world and with minds whose outlook is new and strange to the learner ; in history because an acquaintance with Roman authors means acquaintance with Rome, and Rome is the channel through which civilisation has passed to Europe and to the world ; and in aesthetic appreciation to a lesser degree, and here, by the way, these are wise words about the advantage of a liberal use of good translations.

It seems to me that the claim of Irish to a prominent place in the program of an Irish school should be made in the same spirit. I do not mean that we should start from the assumption that ninety per cent. of pupils will never read an Irish book after they leave school, which would be unduly pessimistic ; but that Irish should be considered as a subject of educational value and taught accordingly. It is easy to affirm that we should all learn Irish because it is the national language, but one is not sure how much truth those words contain, though there is certainly a spark beneath them. They leave us in doubt as to where exactly we are going. But if Irish is valuable as a mental training, and if to an Irishman it is especially valuable, then the case is made, and the teacher's way is clear.

Irish literature contains no drama, no rhetoric, no philosophy, for philosophy in the vernacular dates from a time when the Irish schools had been broken up. But there is history and plenty of legend in prose and verse, and a great deal of religious material, and a fair amount of lyric and ballad poetry, as well as bardic poetry for those who like it, and miscellaneous prose

texts besides. The language is much further removed from English than either French or German, so that a mastery of Irish idiom for the purpose of translating from one language into the other can be acquired only by careful training and the exercise of a precision which is notably lacking in the Irish of the secondary schools at present. The world to which it introduces us is one which is full of appeal to the historical sense of an Irish child, and which, if you go far enough into the past, presents a pre-Christian period unique because it is beyond the shadow of Rome, and an early Christian period which is one of the great features of the early Middle Ages. And besides this there is the powerful attraction of the modern Gaeltacht, which was first felt and conveyed to us by Douglas Hyde in his 'Lovesongs of Connacht' and 'Beside The Fire,' and which is now sustaining the Folklore of Ireland Society and its excellent journal, *Béalóideas*. Finally, Irish prose and poetry, mediaeval and modern, offer opportunities for the exercise of aesthetic appreciation which to an Irish boy will be more favourable than any he may get even from Horace or Cicero or Caesar. If the schools included in their syllabus Keating, Manus O'Donnell and some of the religious works, and introduced at least the Fenian cycle, of which a great part is extant in modern Irish, and some of the best lyrics, together with translations from the earlier literature, and if they deliberately preferred a careful training in Irish syntax and idiom to fluency in very incorrect speaking, I believe that Irish would be a subject of great educational value, with a prestige beyond any other; and this independently of whether the pupils ever learned to speak Irish or not.

This brings us to an important consideration. The situation is dominated by the fact that seventy per cent. of the pupils of secondary schools, and probably ninety-five per cent. of the pupils of primary schools, outside the Gaeltacht, will never become fluent speakers of Irish. I exclude of course model



schools and preparatory colleges where conditions are exceptional. Every sensible person knows this, although there is some hesitation about admitting it. In fact, it should not dishearten us. The only revival of the spoken language worth hoping for must come by the spread of the living Gaeltacht, which could be a natural recovery with a minimum of disturbance to the lives of the people concerned and to the structure and tradition of the language itself. If in twenty or thirty years towns such as Dingle, Clifden, Oughterard, even Galway, are really Irish-speaking, the revival will be on its way to victory. And it is very important for the schools outside the Gaeltacht that this should be recognised. It is important, too, for the universities and for the country, because unless students come up with a fair training from the schools, the work of the universities will be impeded, and Irish studies cannot progress as they should.

At present it is clearly the first of the two points of view considered above which prevails. I plead for the second as the only one worthy of the teacher's approval. At the same time, it must be admitted that there is a general purpose amongst people outside the Gaeltacht to acquire the spoken language, and the schools may not disregard that. Their first care is education, but in the extraordinary circumstances that exist, they are entitled to give special attention to proficiency in speaking Irish. That is for the prefect of studies to arrange. Moreover, within and around the Gaeltacht quite a different plan must be followed, because Irish will be used as the medium of instruction. This need not in the least interfere with the serious approach to Irish studies which I have suggested. The position in those areas will be easier because no special provision need be made for practising the spoken language.

If a change is made in the general attitude to Irish in the schools, we may hope for great improvement in the future. Teachers and pupils will feel a new security in their work and find themselves in contact with a discipline worth cultivating.

A literature worthy of attention, and at present neglected, will become known and will be studied. And, not least, we shall be rid of the pretence which does such harm to the Irish movement. Who has not sat miserable during the performance of Irish plays and Irish musical items which were disgraceful in every particular, only to join at the conclusion in the chorus of praise? That must come to an end. If an Irish book is silly or dull or badly written, there is no use in pretending that it is not so, although one has to beware of discouraging where only encouragement is needed. In other spheres of activity standards are high, and they are likely to be higher. The standard in regard to Irish should be the highest of all.

MYLES DILLON



## SACK OF THE ABBEY

As Theatre Editor, I feel called upon to state a purely personal reaction to the Attack on the Abbey last month. That the Abbey is open to attack I agree, but good strategy suggests that the attack be directed at other points than those chosen, hostility to native Irish outlook (Mr. Dowling) and equal indifference to cosmopolitan outlook and methods (Mr. Wall). I would rather undermine the foundations by requiring the Abbey to be Gaelic in spirit by doing the very plays Mr. Dowling attacks, properly and with the cosmopolitan standards of technique they require. This would require new Directors, new players, a new theatre and a new public, for the essence of the whole trouble is that the Abbey is a perfect expression of the Irish people as it now is, warped and maimed by adoption of a non-native culture. This I propose to show.

The public, far from being disgusted, flocks to enjoy "primitive peasant drama," and that public is not confined to Dublin. Now, the present national importance of the Abbey arises in this satisfaction of popular demand rather than in adhesion to any aesthetic group, and the Directors are simply accepting an outlook which is natural to themselves and ensuring the continued life of their theatre by supplying its demands. And so far as "peasant" drama is concerned, nothing done by the Abbey lately is "peasant" at all—that is, land-conscious, of the earth earthy, the product of people whose whole existence is bound up with and shared with the soil, depending on it, studying it, and delighting in its constant variations and manifestations in flower, fruit and beast, as the true peasant always does. In fine, these plays are the product of our dominant class, the strong farmers whose eyes and lives are on and in local market towns, whose interests are mainly the same as those of the equivalent shopkeeper class in the towns—the

exploitation of property and circumstance, purely for self-aggrandisement in wealth and social position. The class represented, the outlook depicted, the audience catered for, the playwrights, the directors, the players are all equally middle-class, with all the narrowness and superficiality this overworked term has come to connote. In so far as this type of play has no deep meaning nor service beyond mere entertainment, I agree with Mr. Wall that we should have less of it, much less in fact. But, as I pointed out in the November issue, such plays can be of value as statements of this outlook, all the more realistic in so far as they depict it unconsciously in its more minute details. Provided always that the audience accepts them as such and does not ignore their implications for the sake of entertainment. To do this we require *contrast* in the plays presented. We *must* have the aristocratic mellowness of Shakespeare, the imaginative realism of Yeats, the true peasant nature-awareness of Padraic Colum, to place beside the easy laughter-without-tears of George Shiels and the rest. But the Abbey cannot place them side by side. As Mr. Wall remarks, the players can do only one type of play well—the *New Gossoon* type. Other types are at a disadvantage compared with this in this respect and also because the audience, the permanent following, has been stultified through constant serving with this one type. It accepts this naturally; other types require adjustments, through laziness and habit, which hinder appreciation.

Mr. Wall's other main points are: (1) inefficiency and lack of common interest of directorate; (2) the need for "hardness" in content of plays and their production; (3) a proposal to tour plays and to recruit them from amateurs; (4) the necessity for presentation of plays "in the stream of Mainland culture," and (5) failing an improvement, the resignation of the Directorate. As to 1 and 5, neither inefficiency nor resignation arises while the Directors continue to supply a very popular demand, seeing to it always that their theatre is made a paying

proposition by such economies as reduction of stage crew and attendants to a bare minimum, asking a trio masquerading as an orchestra to overcome the babel at intervals (this indeed is so obviously a pretence at giving the theatre "the necessary tone" that for very shame the Directors should either fire the unfortunate trio, which would be highly unfair, or else restore the orchestra to its former strength) and, worst of all, working their leading actors to death in constant revivals of "surefire hits," thereby ensuring adequate return for salaries inflated by American tours. This last point could be met, as Mr. Wall suggests, by a percentage bonus instead of salaries. Point 3 I agree with heartily, as here the plays would meet refreshing and invigorating influences from constant change of scene and audience, as well as youthful enthusiasm, and, more important still, their *national* function would at last be a reality, a direct influence instead of being achieved through bowdlerised rehashes of Dublin productions as done by admiring local amateurs, whose mimicry is certainly not the best form of flattery, however sincere. So long as the Abbey remained in Abbey St. it has been parochial, not of national importance; make it a missionary wagon, a tent-erecting band of evangelists, and it can be one of the greatest moulding influences in our life, simply because it is native. The Italians have done it with their Carro di Tespi, a travelling operahouse of steel scaffolding and canvas, carrying its own lighting plant and even a cyclorama, and presenting operas in every market square of importance in Italy, each town choosing its opera by ballot of the townspeople. Could not this be done here?—not only by the Abbey, but also by the other State-subsidised, state-responsible Gaelic Players (the Comhar Dramuiochta), an annual tour of the Gaeltacht by whom would have immense influence in fostering Gaelic drama and developing possible Gaelic playwrights by giving them object lessons in their art. The theatre must go to the people, since the people cannot go to the theatre. And the cost would certainly not be excessive, in



view of the crying lack of entertainment available in our countryside and the reputation of those concerned, both of which should result in packed houses.

Mr. Wall would, I think, interject here that increasing the influence of the Abbey would only help to stultify taste in country as well as town, while Mr. Dowling would, I am afraid, despair altogether of his country's morale, which would be sapped at the source. Well, neither need feel cause to worry. Firstly, the Abbey repertoire of plays is not at all "primitive," however "peasant" or "demoralising." In general, they are very well made, very entertaining, contain much truth to life of the type obtained by observation if little of that obtained by insight, their humour is generally natural and unforced, being humour of character as much as of plot, they contain much genuine wit, and finally they show increasing *feel* for stage-effect. Now all this constitutes craftsmanship and a sense of style, both of which I know for a fact are well appreciated by the average spectator, who enjoys them as much as the tattered peasants of 1720 enjoyed the style of Eoghan Ruadh O Suilleabhain's *aislings*, poems which often sacrificed sense to sound and lovely sound at that. To this extent then these plays exert a real influence for good, the only influence which drama (apart from poetic or tragic drama) can have, for drama of ideas never has a lasting effect and dies along with the ideas, while comedy's whole *raison d'être* is to release one from influences not to enmesh one in them. I am of course being deliberately provocative in such rash generalisings. Furthermore, these plays are in the "stream of Mainland culture," for they express a middle-class society, which is truly cosmopolitan in its universality, in a local manner, as every other drama does, French, English, German or American. The outlook is the same, the style differs. What Mr. Wall, of course, wants as much as I do is drama which is *aware* of this outlook and condemns it, as Elmer Rice, say, does in *Street Scene* and *The Adding Machine*, this being the "hardness" he asks for. But such dramatists

are outlaws each in their own society, in so far as they do not accept it and their cosmopolitanism arises not from their being in the stream, but rather from their being on the banks and pointing to its muddy and rubbish-laden waters. But do they point anywhere else themselves? I do not see it. Rice and the "hard" school, Kayser, Hauptmann, even Eugene O'Neill at times, the Russians of the revolutionary period, Tretiakov, Andreyev and the rest, all are aware of the current social problem of *bourgeois* outlook and unrestricted capitalist economics. Their solutions for these are either not stated at all, it being left to oneself apparently to work out one's own salvation or else the solution is so purely materialist in origin and humanly dependent, as in Communism, as to be unacceptable *in toto* however efficient along particular lines. The more poetic playwrights, however, have as a result a spirituality, a soul-awareness and sympathy that points out the solution as fundamentally a matter of orientation of ideas, a relation of oneself to a world-order, rather than an agnostic acceptance of things as they are or else an equally shortsighted attempt to distort the world-order to suit an outlook fundamentally sentimental in so far as it never rises above superficial facts, and seeks only to satisfy these, as is done in Communism. There is a spiritual substructure of our existence and cosmopolitan thought, apart from writers like Toller, Lunacharski, Gheon and Claudel, T. S. Eliot and a few Americans, including Eugene O'Neill, either ignore this or is only confusedly aware of it. Cosmopolitanism, therefore, is necessarily sentimental in so far as it evades a basic reality, or is ignorant of it, and substitutes wish-fulfilment for clear-sighted acceptance of facts and an appreciation of their place and importance in the scheme of things.

Now at home we have such an outlook in Gaelic thought which is hardness indeed. And indeed, as compared with futile agnosticism, the Abbey "dissolving of tears in laughter" is preferable, arising as it does out of this very Gaelic sympathy

due to clear-sightedness, Gaelic laughter itself being that of sympathy and reliance on the essential sanity of the world-order, for then only do suffering and misfortune become unimportant when they are regarded as temporary aberrations from a state where laughter is the normal speech of man. This is not sentimentality, it is realism of the clearest kind, the stuff of poetry, animating all things with entire sympathy and tolerance, finding in everything a symbol of the divine, which ultimately is the function of art. Now such an outlook is non-existent in our comedies, but it will not be achieved by going abroad, but rather by staying at home. By all means study and present cosmopolitan drama to learn ever-new tricks of technique, but the content must come from the people who form the audience and their capabilities will not appear until they are educated to it. The Directors cannot do this at present, their players do not allow of it for they require educating themselves, nor will they learn until the Directors by personal influence require it of them. When it is achieved then indeed the Abbey may claim to be the National Theatre.

Mr. Wall's preoccupation is, I think, with playwriting technique mainly, and with the drama of words only as is clear from his remark—"acting, production, lighting, settings—these things are the frame of drama. It exists without them in the printed page." For a man with cosmopolitan ideas this is a remarkable statement, for Continental stagecraft is based on the exactly opposite conception of blending all these elements, including the "drama" or playwrights' words, in one unified whole, the conception of a framework is abhorrent to it. The modern preoccupation is with stage effect, very often subconscious, and the playwright's function is to write a *scenario* for a succession of effects, unified in aim and outlook of course, rather than a purely literary piece of writing. If the scenario has this value, so much the better.

Mr. Wall therefore surprised me by unduly harsh judgments of Yeats as a dramatist who has failed. Now while there is



no dramatist more literary in attitude than Yeats, he is nevertheless so instinctive a dramatist as to allow such fine *pièces-de-théâtre* as the finale of *Shadowy Waters*, much of *The Player Queen*, the apparition of the Angel in *The Hourglass*, to cite a few examples at random. Moreover, Mr. Yeats has a poetic insight whose realism I always think is most revealed in his perfect style, so beautifully attuned to idea, and this *Gaelic* characteristic is just what the Abbey cannot do justice to to-day.

Here Mr. Dowling's only point of attack, the subversive attitude of the Abbey to our native outlook, comes up for consideration. The plays he discusses are not one of them subversive to the Gaelic mind, instead they are all expressions of it, and unconscious outgrowths of it. (Mr. Dowling, incidentally, probably means to refer to MacSwiney's *The Insurrectionist*, which so far as I know, was never translated into Irish; *Aiseirighe* is a Gaelic translation of Daniel Corkery's *Resurrection*, as noble and inspiring a play as any I know). I fear Mr. Dowling is no Gael, or perhaps his practical mind favours action more than insight. His argument as to Pearse's *The Singer* and MacSwiney's *Immolation* Idea is all very well, but misses entirely the ultimate value of both play and idea. I have produced the one and studied the other, and I claim that the idea of sacrifice enshrined in both is essential for the maintenance in the national character of what little nobility is left in it. What is "action"—bloodshed and sabotage—however practically required, worth in the long run if it results in bigotry, selfishness and a dull complacency such as prevails here to-day. The essence of sacrifice is lack of thought for self, and our whole outlook to-day is the shopkeeper one of "what doth it profit?" Which is preferable? Above all, as regards morale, which is more inspiring, more spiritually satisfying? The plays cited all contain a realist acceptance of our history expressed with either poetic imagery or else brutal frankness, as in Conal O'Riordan's *The Piper*, but not one of the authors, no matter

how Anglo-Irish in birth or outlook (and this they are beyond doubt) is untrue to this country nor wished it ill in writing them. Yeats may say "romantic Ireland is dead and gone" (and isn't it?). Lady Gregory's rebel may be a shivering rat on a wharf (the sergeant being the important person in any case). Conal O'Riordan's blacksmith may declare "we were bet," but underlying all this is a *hope* and a desire, a nostalgia which Mr. Dowling as one of those who laboured to satisfy it by recreating our home for us, should be the first to appreciate.

No, the real failure of the Abbey is in not doing such plays properly, its own plays of cosmopolitan standing, and thereby contributing to the resurgence of an Ireland not independent merely, as we shall be some day, but also intellectually alive, establishing a social system reflecting the ideas foreshadowed by such plays. When that day comes, as it must, the Directors need not resign, they will not be there.

SEAN O MEADHRA

## THE SURVIVAL OF DEMOCRACY

THE survival of democracy means, I presume, the survival of the democratic ideal and attitude of mind. It cannot mean the survival of true democracy in the practical government of the world because that has never yet existed. The issue to-day is not whether the Parliamentary system as it exists in France, Great Britain, the United States and elsewhere will succeed in resisting the attacks of Fascists, Communists, Socialists, Anarchists and other opponents of all descriptions. The inevitable verdict is that it certainly will not and there is no reason to deplore that verdict. The question is whether the change, when it comes, will, or will not be, in a democratic direction—whether in other words, we are going to progress or retrogress.

The nineteenth century enthusiasm for representative government was so great that it led to many serious delusions. People came to confound the beginning of self-government with its full realisation and to think that a universal franchise and a sovereign Parliament were perfect prescriptions for liberty. Rarely was it realised that liberty cannot be secured in one sphere, for example, politics, independently of other spheres, such as economics. The current ideas of what constituted a democracy were very incomplete. When they had only the form, people believed that they had the substance and, as a result, when the form did not bring them satisfaction for all their needs, instead of demanding more of the substance as the remedy, they began to turn away altogether from the democratic ideal, or, at most, to treat it as the best of several bad alternatives. When the difficulties and failures of representative government come to be considered in detail it will be seen that in every case the remedy was more democracy, but because the world thought that it already had democracy, it was forced by logic to look elsewhere. Discontent was more important than abstract ideas as a cause of the growth of representative government. But votes for all did not bring complete civil liberty, nor did it inaugurate an age of international peace. Still more important was the fact that great extremes of wealth and poverty still existed and Parliaments seemed unable to prevent the periodic catastrophe of a slump and a depression. Faith began to change into scepticism, and discontent became the ally of the new philosophies.



What was at first little more than an irrational movement among the discontented was to find theories which appealed to it in the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin and in the much less profound philosophy of the Corporate State. Communism and Fascism are the two main forms which the new movement has taken. They are its coherent expression and as such they must be considered in detail.

De Tocqueville once remarked that if the people had to choose between liberty and equality they would choose the latter. The Communist believes that this is true and that such a choice must, in fact, be made. To him the state is no mystical Unity ; it is not—to quote Rousseau—“une forme d'association . . . par laquelle chacun s'unissant à tous n'obéisse pourtant qu'à lui même et reste aussi libre qu' auparavant.” It is “a product of society at a certain stage of development ; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, may not consume themselves and society in a sterile struggle, a power, apparently standing above society, becomes necessary, whose purpose is to moderate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of order ; and this power, arising out of society but placing itself above it and increasingly separating itself from it, is the State.”

Few people will go as far as Engels in declaring that conflict between the classes is the only reason why a coercive power is needed and that the state will wither away when a classless society reaches the Utopian “higher phase” of Communism. Crime has not such shallow roots. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the existence of very poor and very rich is the cause of much disorder. In a great many cases, theft, murder, drunkenness and dissipation may be traced to evil conditions and social jealousy, which emphasises the fact that the State should try to prevent rather than to punish crime and that a better economic system is essential.

The Communist, however, dissents on this point. To hope for improvement by means of the bourgeois State is to hope in vain. In his opinion the State exists for one purpose : to prevent internecine strife by suppressing one class in the interests of the other. No great improvement can be made through such an association, for it is to prevent such an improvement that it exists. Most efficient for this purpose is so-called democracy. The movement towards representative government was led by

middle class capitalists who wanted to break the power of their privileged feudal superiors. The proletariat was deluded into believing that by combining with the bourgeoisie, as in 1832 and 1848, they would bring into power a democratic Parliament which would attend to their grievances. But there was no such happy result. The middle class dominates the workers just as the feudal lords dominated the peasants and they can do so with much more impunity because the illusion of political liberty diverts the attention of the oppressed. Parliament is supposed to be representative and its decisions are declared to be an expression of the People's Will. This is a lie. Parliament represents the Capitalist classes. Its members are drawn from them. The poor have neither the education nor the private income required by a deputy—a statement which is not disproved by the fact that a considerable number of working men have entered Parliament because the representation is still grossly disproportionate. It is instructive to note that the vast majority of British Cabinet Ministers have been public school men. The system of popular elections is a solemn farce. "Marx splendidly grasped the essence of capitalist democracy when he said that the oppressed were allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class should be in Parliament to represent and repress them!" \*

The bureaucracy, which is becoming increasingly powerful, is even more exclusive than the legislature. Only those who have received an expensive education can become Civil Servants, so that the whole, vast organisation has a class bias. In addition, all the methods of forming public opinion are in Capitalist hands. The press is capitalist. The pulpit is capitalist. The broadcasting authorities are capitalist, and capital is usually needed on the platform. Once again, the fact that there are exceptions does not disprove the rule. Whereas members of the proletariat may gather together enough capital for political activity by pooling their resources, the rich have no need to resort to such methods. To say that a man who is born rich has more chance of influencing the State than one who is born poor is no exaggeration but a very obvious fact—and a very deplorable one.

This criticism of formal democracy was inevitable and very much needed. It has often been pointed out in the past that democracy means equality but not economic equality. Political

---

\* "The State and Revolution," Lenin.

equality alone was postulated but this was only a sophism. Whatever democracy may mean in theory it is certain that in practice political equality without something approaching to economic equality is a farce and a humbug. If this had been generally realised the course of post-war politics would have been different.

So the democrat concludes that the central aim of representative governments should be a fairer distribution of wealth. But to the Marxist this is, *ex hypothesi*, impossible. If the capitalists dominate Parliament it is scarcely likely that they will use their power to divest themselves of their economic and political supremacy. It is at this point that the communist differs from the Social Democrat. He believes that before the necessary transference of power can take place a revolution and a period of open war between the classes must intervene. The task of the Communist Party is to lead this revolt and to precipitate it by making the people more class conscious. At present the latter are lethargic. Only the capitalists are clearly aware of their own interests and so far it is they who have been masters. But as soon as the workers are roused numbers will tell and the struggle will end in victory and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Such an attitude may be criticised from various points of view. Open war between the classes would be likely to be more full of horrors than any previous war in history. The innocent would suffer with the guilty and a reign of terror and blood is scarcely calculated to make man more civilised. Nor would the division of the classes be as obvious as might be expected. Most people are capitalists in these days of joint stock enterprise. A man would have to decide whether his interests were predominantly capitalist or predominantly proletarian and, although the choice would be easy in the majority of cases, some difficult ones would inevitably arise. Partly because of this, and partly because of the large number of parasites who live by pampering the rich instead of producing necessities for the poor, the supporters of capitalism would be very much more numerous than Marx seems to have supposed. The conflict would be a fierce one and might end in Fascism instead of Communism. Even if the proletariat were successful it would be immediately faced with the colossal task of re-organising industry on Communist lines and such a task would be likely to prove too great. A sufficient number of trained administrators could not be found. Experience and sound judgment would be necessary but unavailable. The practical



work of government must go forward by a method of trial and error and that requires time. In the end the Communist Government would be forced to compromise with capitalism as it did in Russia.

On every score, gradual Parliamentary change is to be preferred to revolution and it is necessary to examine more closely the Communist assertion that such change is impossible. Although capitalists have far more political power than they should, they have no monopoly. To take an imaginary example ; fifty poor men, by acting together, may exercise as much power as one rich man and so, if they are in a majority of fifty to one, the forces will be matched. What is more, the very existence of a People's Party will make the capitalist party more willing to compromise in the fear of losing support. The Conservative party would be even more obscurantist but for the existence of the Labour party.

In addition to the part played by the representatives of the people there are those capitalists who sincerely desire the good of the nation and who do not act in a narrow selfish way solely to secure the interests of their class. The Marxist, however, applies his theory of dialectical materialism and flatly denies the existence of such people. He declares that if a man is a capitalist all his actions have as their object the preservation of the *status quo*. If he is a proletarian, the reverse is the case. It is meaningless to talk of those who view society as a whole. No such men exist—if Marxian philosophy is true.

If this theory of economic determinism be applied to ordinary life it is scarcely plausible. Men have often other interests besides those of their class, and these classes, far from being homogeneous, are seriously divided. At most it may be conceded that economic motives are of tremendous importance, but other motives also affect conduct to an equal extent. There is no reason to suspect men like Ruskin, Morris and Tolstoy of insincerity. People are certainly not conscious of invariably favoring their class and, if the motives are unconscious, psychoanalysis has never succeeded in tracing them. If the proletariat always acts against the existing order, why has this order survived? The Communist replies that the proletariat is not sufficiently conscious of class. But economic determinism seems to work in such a mysterious way that consciousness can have little to do with it. Furthermore, he is inconsistent. If everything is determined by economic conditions, ideas can have no value and so, by the very act of spreading propaganda, he

contradicts the philosophy expressed in that propaganda. Like all determinists he denies the possibility of free will but, in denying it, he affirms it.

Nevertheless, the Communist criticism must not be dismissed in too summary a fashion. Although it is a gross over-statement, it is not without truth. Very often people do put the interests of their class before those of society and, of the two, the capitalists are more conscious of class than the proletariat. The democrat believes that change must be Parliamentary, but he must face the fact that a hard struggle will have to be fought. The power of vested interests is usually exaggerated in a melodramatic way, but it is very real, nevertheless. Of course, only a few capitalists are rascals but ignorance and unconscious hypocrisy—rationalisation, to use a psychological expression—are likely to be much more serious obstacles than deliberate wickedness. The capitalist does not believe that there is any serious divergence between the interests of his class and the interests of society. To convert him an intellectual appeal is just as necessary as a moral appeal. The whole matter is further complicated by the fact that capital is dispersed. Powerful directors, who are themselves capitalists, might be willing to make a considerable sacrifice, but it is a different matter in the case of their shareholders. To them they owe a duty and so, by a strange paradox, the more conscientious directors may be those who oppose most strongly all attacks on capital. The growth of joint-stock enterprise and all that it entails has made it much more difficult either to allocate blame or to make a moral appeal.

Progress is bound to be slow and difficult. The issues raised are so fundamental that practically the whole country must be won over before equality can be established. For example, a thorough-going Labour government might carry out extensive nationalisation and put an end to serious inequality, but the whole system would collapse if it were possible for a Conservative government to come into power and reverse the policy of its predecessors. In such circumstances the Labour government would be forced to abolish democracy and to attempt to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat, which would mean, at best, a loss of freedom and, at worst, class war. If party government is to be possible, the parties must be agreed on certain fundamentals so as to ensure some continuity of policy. A nation which tries to move very quickly in the direction of equality must sacrifice liberty. In the short period, liberty and equality are incompatible. But it has been argued that

they are complementary and that people who are not equal are not free. Will it always be impossible to attain both liberty and equality? An affirmative answer would be unduly pessimistic. In the long run, both are possible. But the movement towards socialism must be gradual, without being sluggish, and by active propaganda the reactionary part of the nation must be won over, until the whole country is agreed to accept equality as an ideal. Indeed; as we have seen, gradual change is likely to be more desirable for other reasons too.

In the meantime, discontent with existing conditions is inevitable, but if this discontent, which at present lends its support to Communism and Fascism, could be brought to support democracy once more, all might be well. Before this is likely to happen representative government must show that it can succeed at the task of economic planning. By a great deal of bombast dictators may make people forget their troubles. Democratic statesmen, on the other hand, must attempt to cure them, or, at least, to alleviate suffering in the meantime. The opponents of democracy are convinced that it is just here that representative government must fail. It may have worked well enough in the 19th century, when it had merely "to keep the ring." All the real work was done by active, private individuals, who were not hindered in their economic concerns by such absurdities as Parliament. To-day everything is different. Private enterprise cannot cope with the situation and few people have much faith in Maine's "beneficent private war which makes one man strive to climb on the shoulders of another and to remain there through the law of the survival of the fittest." Planning by the state is necessary but democracy is condemned as too clumsy by Fascist and Communism alike. The Communist would not advocate it—except in a very different sense—even after a revolution had overthrown capitalism and order had been restored by a temporary dictatorship.

Parliament is stigmatised as mechanical. It concerns itself with majorities and such paltry details as the counting of votes. In all things it bears the stamp of the English, middle-class mind. It is too canny and slow. Democracy is without principle, without faith and without courage! It lacks all those moral and spiritual qualities so essential to the development of a strong, vigorous nation, and it must be swept away as a mere antiquated form to make place for a new, living, organic state in which each man will represent, not an artificial territorial constituency, but that trade or profession in which he works and the interests of which are so precious to him!



To the democrat this seems to be merely a rhetorical way of saying practically nothing. It is not at all clear what outstanding advantages would be secured by professional representation. A man's interests are always much wider than his job. To divide people in this way is extremely arbitrary. Workers and employers in different trades have usually more in common than workers and employers in the same trade. Professional representation obscures this and it is, therefore, supported by many capitalists. Communists, of course, do not propose the system till after all class distinctions have been swept away by a revolution and they seek to overcome the other objections by providing for the representation of the consumer and citizen as well—a threefold constitution which may have considerable advantages. But the Communist agrees once more with the Fascist in attacking majority rule. The new bodies—so it is claimed—will be “organic !” It is difficult, however, to see how a reversion to majority rule can be avoided since unanimity is not likely to be achieved. In practice this is avoided, because of the very simple fact that these bodies have no real power and are so dominated by the governing party that they are forced to be unanimous.

This is the essence of the matter. The party system is to be dispensed with, because it is said to involve perpetual compromise and ultimately a complete surrender of principle on all important issues. If any forward movement is to be possible a closely organised unified state is needed in which the government will not be changed periodically in a way which makes continuity of policy impossible. The new totalitarian state requires one strong party to lead it. The Communist points out that the proletariat is barely class conscious and that the Party alone can safeguard its interests and prevent a counter-revolution. The Fascist, for his part, argues that the majority of men are too self-centred, as well as too ignorant, to be fit to take part in government. The decisions of Parliament are merely an expression of a conflict of selfish wills. The people cannot tell what is good for them and the task of government should be entrusted to men who, by their intrinsic moral qualities and strong spiritual ardour are alone fit to occupy such a responsible position. In his mind there can be no difficulty in identifying this aristocracy. It is, of course, the Fascist party. The Communist thinks it is the Communist party, but then he is a stupid fellow !

The great drawback to aristocracy and dictatorship is the

fact that there is no very good way of deciding who will constitute the aristocracy nor who will be the dictator. How are we to recognise Plato's Philosopher King, supposing such a being to exist? It is often argued against democracy that, whereas in every other branch of life, work is passing into the hands of experts, in the democratic state the greatest tasks of all are still entrusted to bungling amateurs and popularly elected nincompoops. But this is only partly true and, at any rate, what alternative is there to election? Examinations will not serve nor will any other system of that nature for there is no "science of government" on which everyone is agreed as there is a science of medicine. Until Mr. Bernard Shaw's American professor discovers a formula by which it will be possible to test a man's capacities by merely examining a drop of his blood, election is the best system. "Democracy is a hypothesis that all men are equal, which hypothesis we make to discover who are the best."

An elective system secures some degree of responsibility. To put all power into the hands of a dictator is to run the risk of domination. No one can guarantee that the dictators will think, not of their own interests, but of those of the state—still less that their rule will be wise, even if it is well-intentioned.

Communists and Fascists will not admit that their respective dictatorships are irresponsible. Democratic thought has had such an influence on the world that they are forced to claim that they represent the true Will of the People. Furthermore, they object to the precise meaning of the word "dictatorship." Both parties use the word, but both claim to be aristocracies and, consequently, the evils of a very personal rule are supposed to be mitigated. Sidney and Beatrice Webb emphasise at some length that the Communist party, not Stalin, is the supreme power in Russia.\* The party is certainly some check on the leader, but it is scarcely likely to a very effective one. Men who are sworn to absolute obedience and who are taught "not to reason why" are ill-fitted to act as a sufficient safeguard of the interests of the public.

It is also contended that the responsibility of both the dictator and his party is ensured by the fact that they are pledged to a certain body of principles and that they dare not depart from their public program without incurring the risk of a popular rising. This argument seems almost frivolous.

---

\* "Soviet Communism," Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

Nazism, for example, has the following program :—the stranglehold of the Jews on national industry and finance must be loosened and the Aryan race—that holy and mystical conception—must be exalted and purified, an ideal in the achievement of which no people can sacrifice too much ! Fascism, like Nazism, is little more than empty rhetoric. Only the Communists have any sort of scientific program and the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin are likely to prove much more adequate in ensuring responsibility. But even the Holy Writ of Communism is not detailed enough and it is hard to see how it could be so. Statesmanship must always contain a large element of opportunism and it is beyond the wit of man to draw up a sufficiently comprehensive mandate with which to bind a dictator. Even on the broad issues of policy differences of interpretation are unavoidable. The international opportunism of Stalin and the uncompromising attitude of Trotsky are hard to reconcile.

All mandates and party programs—including democratic ones—are inadequate, but in a dictatorship it is impossible to guarantee that the government will respect them, such as they are, in view of the fact that all criticism has been silenced. Until disaster is actually upon them, people are not likely to rise *en masse* against the government and condemn its irresponsibility. An intelligent educated criticism is needed, and this is something which no dictator dare allow. Criticism implies a legal opposition and the latter implies the possibility of a change of government—all of which is the very negation of a tyranny which can brook no rivals. The government itself must be the supreme interpreter of the program it is pledged to follow!

Under such circumstances there is nothing to save society from the domination of a clever mountebank, or, at best, of a sincere, but one-sided politician. For criticism is necessary, not only to prevent arbitrary rule, but also to make government efficient. To suppress criticism is to rob the country of the service of some of its finest intellects. Socialists and others have rightly pointed out that one of the most serious results of the existing inequalities of income is that so much talent is never given a chance to develop. There may be many "mute inglorious Miltons," for extreme poverty and ignorance do not encourage genius. But the remedy in this, as in so many cases, is more equality and more liberty, not a dictatorship in which one will is imposed on all. Dictatorship brings with it intellectual stagnation and gross inefficiency in the work of government and in every other sphere of science and art.



Religious freedom, too, is lost. The Christian Church in Russia had no very glorious record before the Revolution. It supported the *status quo*. It was the "dope of the working classes." It resisted the spread of any sort of knowledge among the poor. Tolstoy tells of peasants who were exiled to Siberia for reading the New Testament in public. But the way to reform was complete tolerance, not an intensification of persecution in the name of new gods.

Civil liberty, like religious liberty, is rarely found outside democracies. Indeed, it was in the struggle for civil liberty that the English were led to support Parliamentary government. To-day Communists often deride the old slogans of "civil and religious liberty." With unanswerable force they point out that there is not, and never has been, full civil equality in England. It is no idle saying that "there is a different law for poor and rich." Civil equality without economic equality is impossible. But experience suggests that political equality is also essential and that, although there may be little civil liberty in capitalist England, there is even less under an equalitarian, but dictatorial, regime. Sidney and Beatrice Webb are confident that the representative bodies in Soviet Russia, which rise tier upon tier to their apex in the Moscow Kremlin, are a guarantee of justice. But a serious complaint made in a village soviet is likely to be forgotten before it passes through rayon and oblast or, if it is a troublesome complaint, the multiplicity of bodies can be made use of to ensure delay and rejection.

Dictatorship means a muzzled nation in which all are subjected to an irresponsible will. It means intellectual stagnation and the decay of art. It means religious persecution and the sacrifice of all spiritual values. It means a travesty of justice and an arbitrary and cruel rule. It means, in a word, the negation of many of the most cherished ideals for which civilisation stands. Bearing all this in mind, it is necessary to consider for a moment what Communism and Fascist, respectively, offer in exchange for such a sacrifice and whether they are likely to achieve even their limited ideals.

Communism invites a sacrifice of every form of liberty in order to secure equality in material wealth. Of course, absolute equality is not aimed at but an approximation to that ideal condition when each gives according to his ability and receives according to his need. It is assumed that the sacrifices involved will be well worth while if they make possible such a consummation but the assumption is only that of a materialist. So

long as people are well fed and well clothed it is thought they will be moderately content. But men are more than animals. Their spiritual natures cannot be completely neglected. Anti-Godism will be disastrous in the long run, because it is impossible to go on repressing one of man's most fundamental instincts. Even if Communism achieves its end it is not likely that that end will satisfy. People want more than bread. They demand spiritual things and, if only carnal things are permitted, they are likely to become extremely carnal and shoot their rulers ! The Russian Communists realised this and thought it advisable to give such forces a further outlet than that provided by party enthusiasm ; they virtually "deified" Lenin. But such methods are too crude to postpone indefinitely a spiritual and intellectual revolt.

In the eyes of the democrat, not only is the sacrifice demanded by Communism too great, it is unnecessary and will even tend to prevent rather than to aid the achievement of the Communist's end. Communism suffers from the serious disadvantages of every form of dictatorship. It is too personal. The intellectual loss to the country resulting from the suppression of criticism has already been mentioned. A statesman may sincerely try to interpret the "People's Real Will," but in a muzzled country his chances of success are small. It may be pointed out that there is a highly complicated pyramidal structure of representative institutions in Russia and that the dictator can take counsel with these. But in view of the fact that they can never express openly their real opinion, their value is likely to be problematic. The same is true of the various associations in the Corporate State. A dictatorship is forced to survive without criticism and without the keen intellectual support which is to be found only in a free country.

The fact that all opposition must be suppressed has another serious repercussion. A dictatorship is necessarily limited by the life of the dictator. When he dies the effect is much more serious than in the case of a democratic leader. It is very rarely that anyone can be found of sufficient ability and popularity to succeed—and this for the very good reason that during his lifetime the dictator has been forced to remove all such men. Anyone who achieves eminence must be conveniently disposed of. Balbo must be sent to Libya and Trotsky kept in exile. In the past, when a dictator died his country has usually been forced either to recall an exile, who may reverse the policy of his predecessor, or else to revert to some form of representative government. The one exception is the succession of Stalin to

Lenin. But who will succeed Hitler or Mussolini? Who will succeed Stalin himself?

It is only reasonable to doubt whether Communism, faced with such difficulties, can succeed. The Soviet regime in Russia may collapse altogether or it may save itself by undergoing a sea-change and becoming democratic. Is the present relaxation of the censorship an indication of such a tendency?

Fascism has similar disadvantages to contend with, but its chances of success are even more remote because its economic policy is also unsound. Economic equality is certainly not aimed at. Indeed, there can be little doubt but that some of the supporters of Fascism see in it a way of combating the attack on property and privilege. The argument summarised above in which democracy is condemned as unsuited to planning is deceptive. Democracy can plan but not in a way calculated to please capitalism. The heavy taxation levied at present to pay unemployment doles and various other benefits are a sample of what is to come. Even now this is a crushing burden, scarcely bearable at times of prosperity and intolerable during a depression. Planning is necessary, but it must be in a different direction and it must not be controlled by the people. A handful of unscrupulous, class-conscious men can gather round them a vast crowd of the more decent and honorable capitalists by merely raising the cry that property is in danger and that our historic rights are being attacked by a crowd of blackguardly Reds! Capitalism is the reality behind the screen of the Corporate State.

The possibility of capitalist planning succeeding is of vital importance to the survival of democratic ideals and a short digression on economics is necessary. With the present distribution of incomes, an increase in employment would only be possible if investment increased more than proportionately to the total increase in output. This does not take place because the investment available would not be remunerative unless the rate of interest could be considerably lowered. But for various reasons this rate is "sticky" and so the increase in employment cannot occur beyond the limits of boom and slump. To remedy several broad policies may be followed. Income may be more evenly distributed, thus increasing the tendency to consume and reducing the amount of investment on which an increase in output must depend. Communists and democrats may follow such a policy. *Ex hypothesi*, Fascists can not.

The second policy, which should be followed simultaneously, is unremunerative investment by the State and to this Fascism



can consent. If extra taxation proves to be necessary, the powerful vested interests behind the government can be spared and the burden put on the smaller capitalists. The problem will be simplified if the rate of interest is low and this, in turn, will be more possible, even in a country which is not on the gold standard, if there is a favourable balance. An accumulation of the precious metals is also a form of investment ; and foreign markets will absorb some of that surplus of goods which is the result of "the chronic tendency for the propensity to save to be stronger than the inducement to invest." It is, therefore, desirable to buy as little as possible from other nations. In other words, economic nationalism and imperialism emerge as Fascist policies and partially determine the form which the unremunerative investment will take. To some extent it will be in roads, public buildings, land drainage, and so on, but most of all it will be in armaments which are not only better adapted to the policy of economic nationalism and imperialism, but have the further advantage of being more exciting.

Although it is certain that very few Fascists understand or believe this theory of unemployment,\* they follow in practice a policy which partially agrees with it and which is an excellent accompaniment of that political ideal of the State as Power which is offered to the nation as a whole. Obviously Fascism cannot promise equality but it does promise more efficient planning and freedom of a special kind, namely, freedom for the state. Patriotism has succeeded Christianity as "the dope of the working classes," and it has proved very effective, especially in the case of those great powers which had been humiliated in the Council of the Nations. Their firm resolve to recover their national dignity and prestige was certainly not blameworthy, but unfortunately Fascism did not lead them to the achievement of legal freedom but to the freedom of the strong in a state of anarchy. Neither Fascist economics nor Fascist patriotism can be reconciled with international co-operation and a rule of law. One nation's gain is seen as another nation's loss, and competition, not co-operation, becomes the keynote of policy. Such extreme economic nationalism and wild imperialism can have only one ending. International relations degenerate into a dog fight. In a very frank passage in "Mein Kampf," Hitler says : "I need the East . . . and to obtain that which I need I must first get rid of my hereditary enemy in the West, because one never knows what he may do

---

\* This theory is a very crude outline of the one put forward recently by Mr. Keynes.

and he has a regrettable prejudice against letting the strong crush the weak. This is an idiosyncrasy fairly common in democracies but not to be found among a virile people."

In such circumstances dictatorship is likely to spread, just as it spread after the war. As conditions become more and more chaotic, it is more and more clearly a case of every nation for itself and the devil take the hindmost. What seems to be needed is not a Parliament but a strong man; and liberty is forgotten in the cry for revenge and victory. The final result of Fascism is not a pleasant one to contemplate. If it is not checked it will smash civilisation in pieces and capitalism, in trying to save itself, will destroy both itself and society as we know it. The only hope is that people may come to their senses and overthrow the Fascist regimes before such a pass is reached. One conclusion is certain. Whether or not the democratic ideal will survive, Fascism will not survive. It will end either in common ruin or in revolution.

The likelihood of Fascism receiving a decisive check depends largely upon the attitude in which the existing so-called democracies face international problems and upon the general vigour and efficiency of their governments and there seems to be little in post-war history to encourage a very hopeful outlook, although it is as easy as it is common to be unduly critical. In England, France and America, the three great powers which must set an example of good self-government, the general attitude is one of indifference and cynicism. There is no strong faith in democracy and until that faith has been restored nothing can be done. The present lack of it is the most serious obstacle to the spread and development of self-government—more serious, even, than Fascism or Communism.

The old watchword of democracy was education, and this may certainly be repeated to-day. But academic instruction is not enough. It must be remembered that the theorists of the last century believed in the self-educating power of representative government. It was held that the very working of the system would bring with it more knowledge and experience to the common man, and the use of his political power would make him more enthusiastic and public spirited. The fact that he has instead become cynical and disillusioned may not be due to an inherent defect in democracy, but at least partially to the fact that the representative machinery adopted was very poor. In England, at least, Parliamentary reform is an essential prelude to revival.

It is not to be wondered at if an Englishman is inclined to smile when he is told that he governs himself. Every few

years he is asked to vote for one of a number of candidates with whom he has very rarely any personal acquaintance. None of them may represent his own political opinions and some of them are likely to be men of poor character and little ability, because really able men are becoming more and more unwilling to devote their time to Parliamentary work. For Parliament itself is becoming less important. The increased size of the electorate has led to closer party organisation and, as a result the Cabinet can usually rely on an "automatic" majority. It can exercise excessive authority and should any supporters prove recalcitrant over a certain measure it can often intimidate them by threatening to use the Royal Prerogative, dismiss Parliament and leave them to face the expense of another election without party support. The Cabinet, however, has neither the time nor the ability to perform the vast number of duties which it has arrogated to itself. In turn, it is bullied less obtrusively by the bureaucracy which really rules the country. Under such circumstances it is absurd to talk about self-government.

This criticism is much exaggerated. A free press, a free platform, and an outspoken Parliamentary opposition still provide some method of forming and expressing public opinion, and neither the Cabinet nor the bureaucracy can ignore public opinion altogether. But vast reforms are certainly needed, and once again the remedy lies in more, not less, democracy. Democracy implies the rule of the majority, a principle which has been sometimes wrongly based on a misunderstanding of equality and which has, therefore, been adversely criticised.\* Professor Hans Kelsen states the matter more clearly, as follows: "Il n'y a qu'une seule idée qui conduise au principe majoritaire: l'idée que sinon tous les individus du moins le plus grand nombre d'entre eux doivent être libres."†

It is this principle which is obscured by a system of single member constituencies. At present the government which commands a majority in the House rarely commands a majority in the country. Abstract democratic ideas demand a reform along the lines of proportional representation, and in practice this concession to democratic theory would remove many of the abuses mentioned above. It would ensure that more points of view would be represented. By increasing the number of parties it would make a coalition government essential and, in turn, would tend to remove the danger of an "automatic" majority and all the abuses which result from it.

---

\* See, for example, "The Dogma of Majority Rule," by Walter Lippmann.

† La Démocratie.



It may be argued that a coalition is rarely satisfactory. The parties composing it cannot both work together and conduct their independent electioneering. This objection, however, would be very largely removed if single constituencies were abolished.

A comprehensive Reform Bill \* would also have to include reforms of the composition of the cabinet, of the Second Chamber and of the general technique of Parliamentary procedure, such as the way in which Bills are brought before the House. Sub-cabinets would have to be appointed to inspect the work of the Departments and thus leave the over-burdened minister free to attend to more general issues. By these means the "control on behalf of the people" would be made more real and the general efficiency of representative government increased. The power of the House would be enormously increased and, as a result, abler men would be attracted to it. But the supreme advantage of such a Reform Bill would be the fact that it might lead to a recovery of the general faith in democracy by reminding the nation that it has not yet reached the limits of self-government and that the possibilities of further progress in the democratic direction may be great. It is worth while experimenting with a system which offers intellectual and spiritual liberty and a government made more efficient and more responsible by open criticism.

Above all, the popular idea of the meaning of democracy must be enlarged. In the past, certain conditions, such as the freedom of the press, have been put forward as essential to democracy, and these conditions cannot be ignored to-day. A government which tries to reduce freedom of expression deserves to be denounced as unconstitutional. But it is becoming clear that there are two ideals which must be pursued by every democrat, irrespective of party. They are internationalism and economic equality. Democracy will not flourish in a state of international anarchy nor can it ever be achieved so long as a grossly inequitable distribution of income is left unaltered.

T. WILSON

---

\* This part of the argument refers, of course, to the problems of the United Kingdom alone and no more to those of the Free State than to those of France or the U.S.A.—countries in which reform may be equally necessary but in which it must follow different lines. Proportionate representation has long been adopted in the Free State, and apparently with considerable success, if we make allowance for those difficulties which are the evil legacy of a period of revolution and unrest. If it were adopted once more in Ulster the Progressive elements would secure a representation more in accordance with their size, at the expense of extremists of both the other parties—parties which are equally obnoxious to any liberal-minded person—and the unhealthy domination of the Unionists might eventually be broken. T. W.

## *THE TOLERANCE OF CROWS*

Death comes in quantity from solved  
Problems on maps, well-ordered dispositions,  
Angles of elevation and direction ;

Comes innocent from tools children might  
Love, retaining under pillows,  
Innocently impales on any flesh.

And with flesh falls apart the mind  
That trails thought from the mind that cuts  
Thought clearly for a waiting purpose.

Progress of poison in the nerves and  
Discipline's collapse is halted.  
Body awaits the tolerance of crows.

CHARLES DONNELLY

## *23RD INST.*

In the public library on the twenty-third  
young men were reading papers  
fastened somehow to the board :  
it all looked neat and comfortless  
and old men in lots of clothes  
were shaking with their books  
at cold uncomfortable tables.

Just off Grafton Street  
in this weather  
there came the welcome redolence  
of certain red carnations.  
But at night when most not wanted  
one had a long pitiful remembrance of  
the cold old man in the library  
reading his book —  
and wished for  
the redolence of those red carnations.

EILEEN BRENNAN

## FOG

THE fog grew lighter but no less impenetrable with the advance of morning. The curragh glided silently between the stumps of old piles that rose shadowily out of the opaque, grey-green water. The two men rested on their oars, listening, as the lifeboat house bulked a darker mass above the confused jumble of boats and spars.

"He should be there by now, Mick," whispered Murty Walsh. The other did not answer, sitting frozen and detached.

"If he don't come, Mick," went on Murty nervously, "if he don't come, will we be going up, anyway?"

"Give him a minute," said Mick Fahy.

They heard a cautious whistle, and in a few even strokes they reached the shore. Tomeen Fahy was there to meet them, and between the three of them they lifted the curragh out of the water and carried it up under the lee of the lifeboat house.

Out from under the skirts of the fog the sea crept murmuring along the shingle, snake advancing its coils and retreating with sibilant whispers.

"We were afraid you wouldn't get word in time, Mick," said Tomeen.

"'Twas late when I got it," said Mick, "when did it happen?"

"Ten o'clock in the morning, the minute after the priest was gone that brought her the Communion after early Mass."

"God rest her soul," said Murty, taking his rifle out of the bows and slinging it over his shoulder.

"Better not be talking here," said Tomeen, "the wind of the word would be enough to bring all the men in the barracks out."

The three set off along the shingle, Mick walking ahead, grinding the loose, round stones harshly under his feet. The others went more carefully. They took the cliff path, crossed the fields to the main road and started up the boreen that served the farms of the Moriarty's, the Fahy's and the Walsh's farther back. Under the fog the land was dead, without movement. Moriarty's house looked at them out of stupidly glazed eyes.

"Tell me, Tomeen," said Murty, "are they still black?"

"They're black, all right," said Tomeen.

"Wouldn't it make a difference to them now that ye've trouble in the house?"



"It might," said Tomeen, turning away.

"By Christ," said Murty, "if they stir a hand——."

"But, Tomeen, don't be giving him any news of Martin, now."

"I won't," said Tomeen.

"It makes him mad entirely now to hear tale or tidings of Martin—and there was a time when the devil wouldn't separate them."

Tomeen was looking at the ground, Murty went on in a rapid whisper:

"Do you know, Tomeen, if something doesn't happen soon he'll get himself killed and the whole bloody column with him. Nothing will do him but operations and more operations."

"Ye might be shut of him now," said Tomeen, "for Kate will be trying to make him stay."

"Yerra now, I wasn't saying anything against him," said Murty, "only he doesn't know we're beat. But God knows 'tis the wrong time for me to be talking like this and ye with trouble enough on ye."

They crossed the haggard towards the open door of the house.

As Mick came into the house, Kate confronted him. For a second they stood face to face, then she turned away with her apron to her eyes. The men sat round the kitchen in heavy, serious attitudes. They muttered their sympathy and blessings on the dead woman. The grandmother, who had been whispering head down over the ashes, began to rock her body to and fro; her parched, wrinkled, yellow face became rigid; her bony hands clutched one another; she fixed eyes like garnets, unnaturally bright, on Mick. The house quieted as she swayed, facing him.

"A Viheel, a Viheel, but you've come home to a sorry house—a sorry house and the light gone out of it. Jesus in Heaven, pity her this night. Jesus give her comfort."

And he stood there in the middle of the floor, a tall wiry man, with a hard face that was almost expressionless, only that its hardness had meaning; an acceptance of desperation and tension as the norm. In his eyes, too, there was an unnatural fixity, but a fixity finely poised and vulnerable.

The old woman's voice grew harsh and shrill, moaned, sang, moved through meditations to climax of agony. The men bowed their heads before it. Her keen cut the heart, so charged was it with the doom of mortality; that comfort, housebuilding, child-bearing and rearing are but passing things. As she keened,

the yellow stained walls, the dresser of crowded delph, white wood of chair and table, worn more solid with familiarity, became unreal and strange. Anyone could see that she keened more than the death of one woman, though that same woman was her daughter and the mother of Mick Fahy standing there without movement, and of Tomeen behind him, gulping back his sobs into something near silence. Her old face, yellow and creased, lined through years you couldn't count by the tides of day and night, of love and passion, fear and anxiety, calmed again with hope in the Fatherliness of God, was now become a dead mask. And from behind it her keen was the crying of the mother of hopeless nomads, for the while she harrowed herself with forgetfulness of God. But it had discipline, as though of set purpose to purge all that might hear of the illusions that make bearable the travail between the cradle and the grave.

She keened the dead woman, giving voice to the despair and isolation that is dead flesh. With a word she conjured the living likeness of a smile and killed it anew. She flung it all against Mick's motionless face; he and she confronting one another like foils in a mystery.

She finished, and as an actor stepping off into the wings throws off a mask, she said in an everyday voice: "Go on down to her, a Viheel."

He went down into the room. Black shawled women sat back against the walls. They murmured to one another as he came in. Isolating him with the corpse on the bed. Like a chorus, commenting, underlining the agony.

"'Tis he feels it, God help him."

"Little do we know. Little do we think what God has in store for us."

He knelt by the bedside. He saw the still, white rigidity of the face, the waxen transparency over brow and cheekbone. It was not the change that falls over the face of death that horrified him, but that so much likeness with the living was left. He was discovering death. No more will she move, laugh, cry or struggle. He felt he had been forsaken, like one that had been robbed. She was gone and the realisation came to him that now she had her own way to make, apart from him, apart from Tomeen and Kate and the place. Then he prayed, in his heart bearing frantic witness to the goodness of her. He could not bear to think that God in judgment should hold her for less than he did himself.

When he rose to his feet the women surrounded him with mourning in slow, unreal voices. They were old women, most

of them mothers, and somehow, in all they said he felt a hidden accusation, as though the young by some subtle antipathy, wrought the death of the old; as indeed, old leaves are loosened from the twig by the swelling of a new bud.

"She has peace now, that hadn't it for many a day."

Kate had tea ready and some eggs boiled for him when he came back to the kitchen. He didn't want to eat but he swallowed the scalding tea. Kate sat at the table, too, and talked in a quiet voice about the funeral, telling him what she had done, the kind of coffin she had ordered, the arrangements she had made about the Mass and the grave, how she couldn't get word to Uncle John on account of the railways being broken down.

Their vigil done, the women left, passing close-shawled through the kitchen in ceremonial silence.

"You'll stay for the funeral," she asked.

"I will," said he. "Where did Murty go?"

"He wouldn't stay for a bite of breakfast but went straight up to his own place."

"I'll have to get back to-night, anyway," he said, after a while. Kate looked away.

A few of the men were still huddled around the fire. Pat Ferriter and old Dave Donoghue were keeping up a heated gabble. Con Sullivan was nodding half asleep on the settle. Outside was blank fog and unnatural silence.

"Do you have to go back there, Mick?" asked Kate.

Mick nodded.

"Why couldn't you stay now?"

"If I was alone in it, I would," he said. "But the boys will be expecting me back."

"Surely they wouldn't now, with only Tom and myself in the place."

Then Mick turned a bitter face on her:

"For the love of God, leave me be, Kate. I'll have to go back and the sooner the better—for I won't be renegeing on them that are with me. I won't, by God, not even if——"

'Twas then Dave Donoghue took a run as far as the kitchen door. "Whist," said he, and stood listening. "It's them, by God," said he. "It's them. What did I tell ye?" His voice was a thin, bitter croak.

"What's up with him?" asked Mick.

"The Moriartys," said Kate gloomily.

From down the hill came the irregular rattle of cartwheels on the stony boreen, the sound muffled and blunted by the fog.



"Run out," said old Dave to Pat Ferriter, "and see what's in it. But don't let them catch sight of you." Pat hobbled across the floor like an unwieldy crab and disappeared into the fog.

"What the hell is it?" asked Mick of the crowd in general.

"Yerra, 'tis nothing," said Kate, "only they'll have it that them below are giving information to the Staters."

Old Dave came up and confronted them both.

"If ever I said the like, hadn't I my good reason for it." The men by the fire murmured sullen agreement.

"There's your own mother inside there on her last bed and not a sinner of them put his nose inside the house of her waking."

"It wouldn't do them any good to give Mick away," said Kate stubbornly.

"God Almighty, Kate, is it out of your mind your going, trying to keep your own brother where he isn't safe waking or sleeping, nor for one minute if they know he's here? Would you have his death on your hands, Kate Fahy? That's what you'll have if you don't give heed to me."

The men behind Dave nodded wisely.

"Look here, Dave," said Mick, "they aren't that black."

"As sure as your own mother is lying there dead this holy and blessed morning, the Moriartys would see your own corpse hanging from a high tree and 'twould be a sweet sight to them."

At that Pat Ferriter lurched in, breathless.

"'Tis Simon Moriarty himself," he nodded spasmodically between the words, "Simon himself and no creel either, nothing but the bare butt and no one but himself."

"Kind father for him," said Con Sullivan. "Simon isn't the first of the breed."

"Go back, boy. Put yourself out of reach of their spite."

"For God's sake, Dave, give it over," said Mick, and a dull anger on him. "What cause have they? Even if Martin took the other side, they're not as bitter as that. Not at a time like this, anyway."

"I'll tell you something, Mick Fahy," said Dave, and they all looked at him, "and 'tis a thing we hadn't any mind to tell you in the way things are. Martin Moriarty isn't fighting with the Staters any more. Martin Moriarty got his death over a week ago."

"Jesus," said Mick softly.

"They couldn't blame you, Mick," cried Kate, "no one could blame you."

She turned away; she couldn't go on looking at the dumb, rigid despair that was in his face.

"Couldn't they," interrupted Dave. "Didn't I hear Simon himself say that any man on the other side was the same to him as Martin's murderer, and that he'd know what to do when he saw one? Ah, Mick," he went on. "We didn't want to be telling you now. Sure I know ye were great in the old days, and sure, Mick, if he took the wrong side, he's only himself to blame."

At that Murty came in. He looked irresolutely around at the group in the kitchen.

"You've been hearing about Martin Moriarty, Captain," he said to Mick Fahy.

Mick nodded.

"An' old Simon gone away in the butt," said Dave. "Did you hear that, too?"

"I didn't," said Murty.

"Make him go back, Murty," Dave was saying. "For the love of God make him see sense, or they'll have him in Tralee jail before he's a day older."

"Shut up, Dave," snapped Mick.

Murty's face hardened against Dave.

"I'll be staying too, Captain," he said.

He stood to attention as Mick got to his feet.

"You won't, Murty," he said. "Be ready for me at the foot of the boren in a couple of minutes."

Murty went out.

"We'll be easier in our minds with you gone," said Dave.

"Ye will," said Mick bitterly.

Kate was crying softly, the tears running free down her face, her hands dead by her side, her eyes fixed sightlessly on the blank square of fog that filled the window.

He went down into the wake-room, empty now except for the corpse on the bed. The candles were burning low in their sockets, the dripping wax congealed into fantastic yellow shrouds. The room had an unhealthy, musty air, thick with the oily smoke of the candles; divided between their garish flickering light, and the grey light from the window.

So Martin Moriarty was killed. Dead, too, like his mother. No, not like his mother. She died at the end of her days, after bearing and rearing a family. Her face looked content to be finished with life. No, Martin wouldn't look like that. You'd see by it that the life was torn out of him before he was finished with it. He'd have a Stater's uniform on him and he dead.

Kate came in softly behind him.

"She went quickly," she said, "you'd hardly know the breath was leaving her, and she had no pain."

He said a prayer and together they came back to the kitchen.

"I'd better be going now, Kate," he said heavily. "If the fog lifts we'll have to wait till night and the searchlights would find us quick enough then."

The men shook hands with him and Kate went with him to the end of the haggard. There he left her and she watched his figure blurr and disappear into the fog in a few paces.

Murty was waiting for him at the foot of the boreen. Together they crossed the main road and made off down through the fields towards the cliff. Mick Fahy walked ahead, dour and grim. Murty following behind, was nervy, looking every couple of seconds over his shoulder and holding his rifle at the ready.

They got down the cliff path, steadying themselves by grasping the tussocks of thin wiry grass, and set off along the shingle. Down here the fog was thicker. The water complained softly among the stones. An odd gull screamed hoarsely and passed like a vague shadow overhead. When they neared the lifeboat house they crouched behind a rock, watching. Withered tufts of seapinks spiked from crannies in it. There was no movement round the lifeboat house. They crept forward and in a few minutes they had the curragh afloat. Murty got in and locked his pair of oars with the tholpins. Mick was standing on the shingle holding the stern.

Then they heard voices and muffled thudding of feet. Michael ran the boat out, his feet splashing in the shallow water.

"Hey, there," came a shout, as scattered figures appeared dimly through the fog.

Mick Fahy vaulted over stern and the curragh slid silently through the water. In one sweep of the oars Murty had her under way. A confusion of shouting broke out on the shore behind them, a burst of rifle fire. A white scar appeared as if by miracle on the thwart. They were both rowing now and the shore was lost as the greyness closed round them, clammy and wet. Soon the corrugated water off shore gave way to an undulating roll. Soon, too, they could hear the breaking water on the half submerged rocks of Carraignaspaineach drum dully on the left. Sometimes only a narrow circle of marble green sea was visible. In a second it would widen and grow brighter as the fog thinned for a space.

Then they heard a new sound, a muffled purring behind them.

"God," said Murty, "they're after us."



"We'll pull down by the rocks, they won't risk a boat there in the fog."

"They might have someone of the place with them."

The thought put a chill on Mick Fahy. The pursuit behind grew louder, the purring now resolved itself into a series of staccato beats.

"They've got Dinny Flavin's boat," said Murty.

The fog was close around them now, nothing visible but a narrow of circle of sea. Behind them the sound ceased and began again within a few seconds.

"Stop!" said Mick, "they're following us by the noise."

They rested on their oars. The wash and rumble of the Carraig were nearer now. The roll was broken by the backwash. The curragh rocked with an irregular motion.

The sound of the motor boat came nearer, nearer and stopped dead not a hundred yards away.

"They won't come any closer to the Carraig," said Mick, in a whisper.

"Ahoy there," came a shout out of the fog. "We've got ye all right."

"Come on, Mick Fahy. We've got you where we want you."

Mick was staring into the fog with dull eyes. Wasn't he ever going to get a chance to think. Most of all now he wanted time and quiet. He had to have time. Martin dead, killed, on the other side. Bloody lot of gombeen men, out for their own pockets, giving in when it suited themselves best and to hell with the country. Somehow he could easily imagine the live Martin being fooled by them and their talk. But Martin was dead, killed fighting for them. And dead, he was there on the other side. Instead of nameless men in green uniforms, quick, mechanical, steel-helmeted men, he saw Martin Moriarty.

Murty pulled him by the sleeve.

"Mick," he whispered, "we're drifting in. We'll be on the Carraig in another minute."

"We'll have to make a run for it," said Mick, shaking off his numbness.

He cursed as the sound of pursuit broke out afresh.

Then the fog thinned; the circle around them widened. Facing them as they rowed was the launch, a dark, indefinite shape behind the fog. The men in her looked huge and menacing. They quickened their strokes and already the fog was thickening in the intervening space, when a shout came from the launch.

"There they are," followed by a rattle of a machine gun, which continued after the launch had disappeared.

Mick felt a dull paralysing blow on his neck. To steady himself he let go the oars and gripped the seat under him. But his hands would not grip. He slipped on to the foot boards. He tried to tell Murty to keep going, but instead of words, his mouth filled with blood.

The mutter of that engine was farther off now. They were giving up.

Murty stopped rowing and came back to him. With one oar he held the curragh head on to the sea. He tried to steady the wounded man's head against his shoulder.

For Mick Fahy, fog and darkness were closing in around his head through which the drowning pulse beat weaker and weaker.

Murty's voice came from a long way off—from so far away that it did not matter.

What was he troubling himself about, just then, before the shooting. Remembering was an additional pain. He couldn't go on now, with Martin dead. It was bad enough already, the people getting tired, of the killing and the burning. And nobody knowing rightly what would come of it. But now, with Martin dead on the other side, he'd have to give up. If only his brain were not so numb and unwieldy he could think. Then suddenly the trouble went from him. It would be all right. He'd be even with Martin now, and he dying himself. He'd have an answer now for them.

The hardness went out of his face and he smiled gently. Then his head sagged forward on a limp neck.

Murty lowered the body to the bottom of the boat. He knelt beside it, his cap twisted between his hands.

EDWARD SHEEHY

# ART

## SURREALISM

"I don't know much about art, but I know what I like," is an honest, ingenuous and courageous speech which has been so ridiculed that except in the least sophisticated circles it evokes a well-bred shudder and puts the speaker on a level with the simpleton who says "I knew it was a good picture, because the eyes followed me round the room." Those bewildered persons who do not even know what they like or who lack the courage to voice any definite opinions have devised a formula for meeting certain embarrassing situations which goes as follows, "I don't understand this work of art, unfortunately for me, but I am too wise to condemn it." This cringing kind of criticism is not entirely new. An enthusiastic admirer of Monet is reported to have said: "I don't yet see every shadow as violet, but some day I hope to," which may be taken as the first stirring of a faint aesthetic doubt that is now a full-grown atheism.

The world to-day—not to mention IRELAND To-day—is extraordinarily conscious of the importance of philosophies. It is at last realised that the idea is mightier than the machine, and wars that shake the earth are seen to be merely the clash of rival philosophies. A few years ago philosophy was something vaguely associated with St. Thomas Aquinas or Aristotle, and seemed to have no relation to ordinary life; now the word is on everyone's lips and we are becoming painfully aware that we know little about it. Despite the flood of education, Primary, Secondary and University, with which we have been deluged, it seems we were not educated at all. There were so many things to learn that the most important thing in life was left out. This must be a painful reflection for those whose own education was almost exclusively philosophical, who practically control all education in this country, and who are now feverishly preaching the necessity for that philosophy with which they failed to provide us.

This may seem a round-about way to approach Surrealism, but such a preamble is excusable because Surrealism is much less important as Art than as the manifestation of a stealthily spreading philosophy. It is evident in all the arts and is usually referred to as "modernist," a modest word which does not altogether deny the existence of contemporary work of a different kind. In whatever form it occurs it has some common features, one of which is the absence of the quality of communication. Surrealists communicate nothing. If one could understand what a Surrealist picture meant or what some modernist poetry meant, these works would fall short of the desirable standard. Modernist art is very secretive. The artist creates something, but only he knows what it is. Each one lives in a strange world which has no means of communication with any other and it is therefore clear that to appreciate Surrealist art we must be prepared to abandon the idea of the Universal Man which happens to be a premise of Christian Philosophy. We must realise that



when you say "blue" I may hear "oblong," and when I say "loud" you may hear "damp"—or what have you.

It is not quite true to say that Surrealism is entirely incomprehensible. When we realise that while it is never the same it is always meaningless, we begin to see, if not light, at least darkness visible. To be so consistently meaningless reveals a conscious purpose and indeed can only be achieved by the exercise of considerable ingenuity and it is ironical that an equal ingenuity is expended by interpreters in explaining the unexplainable, and in attempting to provide a rationale for what is deliberately irrational. It is here that the convenient region known as the sub-conscious becomes helpful.

The development of Surrealism in the Arts would be of immense interest as a philosophical study, and something analogous to it might be discoverable in the decay of Egypt, Hellas and Rome. In our own times, Cézanne seems to have been the first to push the art of painting off the rails, though there were signs of speed-wobble before he produced his ridiculous theories about "the cone, the cube and the cylinder," which are still gravely advanced by "critics" as a serious contribution to the philosophy of aesthetics. His ideas are erroneously supposed to have led to Cubism, the true genesis of which (a rich joke) has recently been divulged. But even in Cubism art still retained a hold on some objective facts. The cubes at least were recognisable, as such, but cubes were too rational, too rigid and restrictive to be suffered for long and were soon outgrown. A similar evolution is traceable in all the arts. In poetry the insidious beginning may have been Symbolism (of the Rossetti School), but it is more obvious in Free Verse, which was only verse without rhyme or rhythm, and which has now reached fruition in really successful modern poetry without rhyme or reason. In music Debussy seems, to the untechnical ear at least, to have initiated it with his strange intervals and his slight and stimulating grotesqueries, and here too it has reached its perfection in those compositions which are occasionally broadcast and which sound exactly like a large orchestra endlessly tuning up. These broadcasts are usually prefaced by an explanatory comment in which we are warned that we must be receptive, not combative, and that only those whose minds are encumbered by the shackles of traditionalism will fail to applaud the complete adequacy of every note to express what the composer meant it to express! In the drama it may be observed in most of the works of Pirandello, in one of whose plays a very pointed disquisition on the subjectivist philosophy of Descartes is spoken by one of the characters and another of whose plays, by the way, embodying the same philosophy, has been widely disseminated through the films. In the cinema pure it is noticeable in German camera-work, and is creeping into Hollywood. To discuss its incidence in prose literature is one of our tabus.

Wherever it occurs it is a denial of order and purpose in the Universe; it is a reflection of moral anarchy and spiritual despair. It has been attributed to the mass misery of the Great War, and perhaps with some truth, for, although

wars have been before and lasted longer, no war has ever before finally destroyed the hope of peace. Everything that made the Great War is alive to-day, ten times as strong, and poor humanity, waiting in a sodden despair for the inevitable outburst of hatred and horror, feels itself whirled helpless in a maelstrom that is submerging our civilization and looks up to see the stars spinning in an unstable heaven.

The full tide of Surrealism has not yet come to Ireland, but through the beneficence of the film industry we have been privileged to see not only an exhibition of Surrealist works, but some Surrealists themselves, in repose. The startling thing about these artists was their painful sobriety, reminding one of Mr. Mandragon :

“ Quiet and neat the hat on his head, the coat quiet and neat,  
A trouser worn upon either leg, while boots adorn the feet.  
And not as anyone might expect, a tiger skin all striped and specked,  
Or peacock's feathers with tail erect——”

The eccentric Bohemian with the long hair, the flowing tie, the velvet jacket and the Montmartre hat who told us that “ God's in His heaven, all's right with the world,” has been replaced by a gloomy gentleman in horn-rimmed spectacles, smoking a heavy ministerial pipe, to whom the Universe is a jig-saw puzzle abandoned by an imbecile child. The gloom is genuine enough, for Surrealism is no joke.

Surrealism is only the penultimate stage in this progression towards a recognition of the futility of all human endeavour. The final stage must, logically, be complete negation. Silent music may yet be composed, one long, pregnant pause. Picture frames may be exhibited enclosing significant nothingness. We may be asked to admire books and plays which have avoided being written. And lest this should seem too fantastic a prophecy, it may be mentioned that a movement of this kind has already enjoyed a brief life under the name of Dadaism. But its prophets were in advance of their time and one by one betrayed their principles by doing something. With Truthful James (and the Surrealists) we may well ask ourselves “Are things what they seem, or is visions about? Is our civilization a failure or is the Caucasian played out?” It is, however, a comforting thought that the steady stream of tradition still moves on, indifferent to these squalls, and it is heartening to remember that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

JOHN DOWLING

## EXHIBITION OF INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE

### Presented by the Architectural Graduates Association (N.U.I.)

IF the real nature and significance of the New Architecture can be conveyed in photographs, it could not have been better done than by the excellent exhibition recently held in the gallery of the Metropolitan School of Art, Kildare Street, Dublin. This might have been more accurately called a photographic exhibition of contemporary New Architecture as it consisted entirely

of photographs, contained only work carried out subsequent to 1924 and only work quite free from the sentimental "props" of historic "styles." Truly international, however, it is difficult now to think of any country (except Ireland) that was unrepresented.

It has been said that architecture implies the mastery of space. To judge from the pictures shown, space has never been so well mastered as within recent years. Not even the craftsmen of by-gone Gothic days, with their airy miracles of glass and stone, have surpassed our present-day miracles of glass, steel and concrete. Also, a new beauty is being given us in the New Architecture. Reactionary as it appears, after the spate of blind copying of forms from past centuries—all now without significance in modern building—and stark as some of the work still is, it possesses an international basis on which individual thought and national characteristics are being expressed and from which will develop as great a splendour as was reached in any other period in architectural history.

A foretaste of this splendour was to be seen in all the exhibits and particularly in the churches, although their full beauty could not be conveyed in photographs—magnificent as they all were in this exhibition. One must refer to the church on the Hohenzollern Platz, Berlin, by Fritz Höger and the Kelham chapel at Newark by Curry and Thompson, both outstanding.

In the section devoted to the architecture of pleasure, (which included clubs, restaurants, swimming pools, halls, cinemas, theatres, cocktail bars and zoological garden buildings,) the interior photographs of the Radio City Music Hall, New York, gave a particularly fine impression of the scale on which that amusement centre is conceived. The work of Tecton in the London Zoo, —penguin pool, gorilla and giraffe houses—has already received due meed of praise from other reviewers.

The industrial section, some seventy exhibits, showed a very high standard of design; from a photographic point of view, an evening impression of the Neckar Canal Works, Heidelberg, by Paul Bonatz and as an example of modern building technique, the van Nelle factory at Rotterdam, by Brinkman and van der Vlugt deserve mention. The domestic architecture from all over the world made one again wonder why we in Ireland, by the use of flat roofs and large windows in the right places, are so slow to make the most of the little sun with which we are blessed. We will eventually. Why not now? The photograph which appealed to me most in this group was of a house by Helena and Szymon Syrkus, near Warsaw, set in the midst of tall and slender pine trees that seemed to set the key-note for and were echoed by the equally slender and graceful steel supports of the house itself.

Hospitals, schools, railway and underground stations, liners, trains, exhibition buildings and a host of other works were shown, too numerous to review in detail or thoroughly to study during the week for which the exhibition was open, but all gave convincing testimony of fine things achieved and still finer things to come.

EOGHAN D. BUCKLEY



# MUSIC

## THE ORCHESTRA II

I regret that for some months past pressure on my space has prevented the inclusion in this section of the usual monthly article.

In the November issue of IRELAND TO-DAY, dealing with the necessity for the foundation of a permanent and perhaps national symphony orchestra, I wrote: "For the foundation of such an adequate permanent orchestra the most necessary, if least important consideration, would be the provision of sufficient financial resources to guarantee its security, its permanence" and promised further consideration of such problem in another article. The sense of the statement that money is the most necessary, if least important consideration in this matter, hardly requires elucidation; two factors are necessary for such foundation as is being considered, firstly, an adequate supply of executants and, secondly, a sufficiency of money to pay such executants for their labours and to meet the necessary expenses incidental to such foundation. To-day I deal solely with the second—the financial factor.

Great orchestras are as rare as great string-quartets; I suppose it would be just to estimate the number of the world's great orchestras at six or seven. The names of these mighty are of course well-known—the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic, perhaps, the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia and Boston Symphony Orchestras. And one organization alone out of these six functions apparently without municipal, national or private subsidy—the London Philharmonic; and there are certain exceptional circumstances connected with the existence of this orchestra, mainly the long opera and ballet seasons at Covent Garden which, covering about six months of the year, ease considerably the financial pressure. But this one exception only stresses the truth of the statement that no great orchestra exists for its own purposes without subsidy of some sort, certainly none of the organisations mentioned. The Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra has its guarantee fund of half-a-million dollars, subscribed by wealthy patrons; the Vienna Philharmonic its municipal subsidy—as I say, all these organisations are subsidized and, that, in countries where there is an amount of orchestral appreciation among the people. Here in Ireland, a country which as far as orchestral appreciation is concerned may be said to be in the back-woods, here, such subsidy, private, municipal, or national, is much more necessary than in many other lands if the hope of a musically resurgent Ireland is to be anything other than a day-dream.

What are the possibilities of private subsidy in Ireland for an Irish Symphony Orchestra? According to reports we are a highly spiritual people, and from the vantage point of our protestations we imagine ourselves as fitted to look upon America as a land where the first letter of sin is always \$, or upon continental countries as pagan—obviously inferior to ourselves spiritually. I do not profess, of course, to assess the great depth of this spirituality, but I can

say that I have not noticed amongst us any great tendency to the unselfish expenditure of money. I have an idea that in a competition for the laurels of Mammon, our shabby commercial meanness would be awarded a not inconsiderable place in the winning list. I find that the Irish moneyed classes will gladly subscribe of their wealth to any scheme—provided they draw dividends in this world or the next ; but the thought of doing a fine thing for its own sake has never yet had a place in their mental apparatus. Their guiding principle is :

“ What need you, being come to sense,  
But fumble in a greasy till  
And add the halfpence to the pence  
And prayer to shivering prayer until  
You have dried the marrow from the bone ” ;

and the past years of high endeavour have brought them but an intensification of their fumbling meanness. The hope of private subsidy in Ireland is a vain thing.

There is more comfort in thinking upon the possibility of Government subsidy—until one suddenly realizes the power of the bureaucratic machine. It then becomes plain that if anything is ever to be done to assist art development in Ireland, anything worth while, it will be done in spite of this machine, which seems to have retained all the vices and laid aside the virtues of the English bureaucratic system.

Think of the financial treatment meted out by the Post Office machine to our national broadcasting service, resulting in this service becoming a by-word, a butt for daily contempt—fifty thousand pounds, of which approximately one half will be devoted to the technical expenses, leaving twenty-five thousand pounds for the provision of three hundred and sixty-five programmes. Such sum would not provide daily programmes for a respectable fancy-fair. And lest it be thought that I am impugning the whole machine because I have noted the delinquencies of one department, I would ask my readers to examine certain things for themselves—say the side gates of the Four Courts here in Dublin. These used be surmounted by carven shields—fine, dignified things. These have now disappeared and their place has been taken by two granite bed-knobs—at least that is what their form suggests. Or let them examine the reconstruction work on the balustrade around the Museum buildings in Kildare St. Here white stone vases have been replaced by cast-cement ones, and, crowning indecency, the colour of the cement not being of the required whiteness, the vases have been “ whitewashed.” These are but two examples of the treatment given to buildings of national importance by allegedly responsible government departments ; the list could be lengthened indefinitely—a list of visible symbols to the worship of the only god known to our government machine, the old half-cracked, tin-pot demi-god Economy. What hope is there for us, with such a machine, so many years behind its time that it has not heard yet

*(continued on page 68)*

# THEATRE

## BRANDS—PLUCKED FROM THE BURNING

Not wishing to inflict myself on readers more than is necessary I intend to be brief, and fortunately for Editorial qualms, the still prevailing mediocrity of theatrical fare allows of speedy justice. So—Anew McMaster as Charles Surface saved *The School for Scandal* at the Gate from utter ruin, only he and Coralie Carmichael as Lady Sneerwell and H. R. Alleyne's Moses being in the correct style: the rest, including the producer, Hilton Edwards, almost clowned through the play, not through overdoing effects so much as from lack of polish, of delicacy of touch—asides, especially, were *not* "spoken thoughts," as they should be to assist present-day conviction, but were mouthed at the audience with rather surprising clumsiness, Liam Gaffney, in particular spoiling an excellent Joseph by this. In short, the production style seemed based on Backbite's macaroni wig, and the burlesque effect obtained was not good enough.

Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* was even worse in this respect—being very laboured all round; after all, although quite artificial, the epigrams should seem to pop out unconsciously rather than that an actor should pause slightly, take a deep breath and then throw each epigram in a determined manner at the audience—firstly, it is quite unnecessary and secondly it spoils the play. The only person really in key was Sheila May as Gwendolen, and even she at times succumbed. McMaster's *Earnest*, strangely enough, was quite clumsy compared to his Charles, while MacLiammoir simply displayed some of the old mannerisms with a new grace, being genuinely fresh at odd moments. The settings for this production were over-fussy, while the beautifully painted traverse which served for exterior scenes in *The School for Scandal* was the best thing there. The hearts of the Gate, I think, were already far away and all we saw was a marking time till the bodies should go too.

Nevertheless *Brand* was a very good production, due entirely to lack of mannerisms in MacLiammoir, for it is a one-man show. Here was the Immolation Idea come to life and justified by its realization of an underlying scheme on which the surface reality of life is based and Brand's preoccupation with the ideal, relentless, crushing wife and people in their attachment to the superficial, was Ibsen's manifesto of the ills of his native country. The manifesto has more universal applications, as I have tried to show elsewhere. Meriel Moore's Agnes was rather insipid at first, but was really fine in the Manse scenes, the settings for which, incidentally, were the best in dramatic colouring and mass that MacLiammoir has done lately. The Gate tendency to burlesque and overdo humorous touches cropped up again in Monson's Pastor, Irving's Einor (in his post-wild-oats period), and Alleyne's Mayor—all three being most amusing satirical sketches, but dangerously on the borderline. It says much for MacLiammoir's own sincerity in speech and presence that the play retained its starkness and poignancy. The exterior sets were largely to the sound Gate *Peer Gynt* formula of stepped rostra and jagged wings, good use being



made of floor traps, but the colouring was quite wrong, far too muddy and drab—steely blues, greens, vivid purples and silver grey are surely the colours that suit the spirit of this play. Costumes and make-up generally deserved praise, while some fine groupings were achieved and the climax, somewhat hampered by a rather shrill and incoherent Gerd by Mairin Hayes, was excellent. Incidentally, when will Ibsenites stop gazing admiringly at their idol to do him the much-needed service of adequate and intelligent translation—"Late we linger, Let us go"—Oh!

George Shiels' *The Jailbird* at the Abbey was quite well done all round, no player calling for particular mention except that I admired Shelah Richards for the sheer labour she so skilfully expended on a very difficult part. Act I. promised later doings of great interest, revealing an almost social awareness in the dramatist, whose portrayal of the returned convict and his reception in his native town was so acid that sheer comedy was endangered; and so, to the relief of a packed house, the last two acts were all that Shiels has led us to expect, easy-going and full of humorous types, with everything happy ever after. Incidentally Act I. might perhaps have lost even what strength it had if it were not for F. J. McCormick's quiet yet firm playing as the convict, and credit is due to him for this as also to M. J. Dolan and May Craig as the censorious and self-righteous neighbours, the Kelseys. These with Eileen Crowe, who could have made her part of the dressmaker of more value by more assertive playing, and Shelah Richards who as the affected daughter ensnaring P. J. Carolan (whose hesitant love-making as the returned Yank was great) supplied the essential food for laughter—her "Heh-vuhnz!"—was an automatic signal for the roof to come off—filled the more important roles, though of course the hit of the evening was Maureen Delany's Miss Jane, a marvellous creation indeed, having the exaggerated realism of caricature, but throwing the last act rather out of focus owing to the playwright's determination to clear up all loose ends, thereby making the finale rather flat and somewhat obvious.

*Blind Man's Buff*, Denis Johnston's adaptation of Ernest Toller's *The Blind Goddess* (which dealt of course with the German judicial system) has been the most popular show the Abbey has had for some time—a four-week run is quite unusual for this theatre—mainly due to a very Johnstonian court scene, wherein acting honours go to M. J. Dolan as Theobald Thin (defending counsel), J. Muldoon as Henry Harrican, (state prosecutor,) and T. Purefoy as the Judge (a delightful piece of work this). Miss Moiseiwitsch adopted the good old device of a masked-in stage for subsidiary scenes, speeding-up scene-change through simplification and reduction of settings, and in spite of occasional raggedness, succeeded quite well, the Courtroom set in which the audience became the general public attending the trial being especially effective and pointing Johnston's satirical lines all the more by its authentic details, his adaptation consisting in interpolating local character-studies and changing the whole routine to suit our own legal practice. It was admirably done and very effective, while I was pleased to see that Toller's own essential quality of

"passionate pity" was not subordinated either to satire or sheer comedy. The whole message of the play, a plea for tolerance due to understanding, is in the last few lines where Anice Hollingshed turns from Chevasse as he fails to see, in spite of his own ordeal, the bigotry and mean-spiritedness of his revengeful attitude. This is far more important to Toller than the secondary issue of the value of circumstantial evidence which the main action discusses, and was preserved intact by Fred Johnson's State Solicitor, a fine characterisation of strength and delicacy, showing insight and creative work on the part of this actor, who drove home the significance of the play when the rest of the players seemed to look only at the surface. He was ably seconded by Denis O'Dea in one scene, but otherwise carried the final scenes on his own shoulders. I saw it on the first night when everybody backstage seemed doubtful of the play's reception, and perhaps this accounts for very laboured playing in the opening scenes and rather stilted playing throughout from all but those I have named, but then, again, it might not. I remember other shows . . .

As there has been no Gaelic production yet, and *Death Takes a Holiday*, the final show at the Gate before the Egyptian tour, will probably suffer from the same wander-lust as the other shows, nothing remains except a mention of the advent of Lord Longford's company, with Lady Longford's *Pride and Prejudice*, to take over the Gate, a show which I await with much interest and some hope.

SEÁN Ó MEÁDHRA

**MUSIC**—continued from page 65

the statement that man does not live by bread alone. It adds "the halfpence to the pence," but cuts out the "shivering prayers."

However, something will be done some day when perhaps the whole government machine will have been banished or perhaps exterminated by the injection of a few ideas. At the moment it is difficult to perceive any sign that men are assessed by our government departments as anything but perambulating stomachs. Any hope at present of an adequate subsidy for a symphony orchestra must be reckoned premature. I suppose the first hopeful sign that one can look for will be the emancipation of our broadcasting service from the commercial clutches of the Post Office; but bureaucracy cannot be defeated by its own muddle—it wallows contentedly in its papers until public protest becomes dangerously irritated; until the arrival of such a circumstance, those who try to do anything on behalf of orchestral music will have to continue in their reliance upon those broken reeds, the legacies of our academies—the amateurs.

As these words are not appearing in a humorous journal, I have avoided any discussion upon the question of municipal subsidies. The amount of interest displayed by our municipalities in art may be assessed by anyone visiting any of the new housing schemes. Knowledge on this question may be obtained anywhere in this unfortunate land—probably at the price of blighted eyesight.

EAMONN O GALLCHOBHAIR

## FILMS

### PORTRAITS AND SPECTACLE

AH WILDERNESS—*Clarence Brown.*

KIND LADY—*George B. Seitz.*

TUDOR ROSE—*Robert Stevenson.*

UNDER TWO FLAGS—*Frank Lloyd.*

Pictures as entertainment. Pictures as "art." Pictures as cultivated habit. Pictures as everything but an honest attempt at doing a good job well—the order of the day in the cinemas. Still do the dead bones of stage rattle amongst the shadows. Still does the Atelier smudge the background into a devastating environment, while the inflated Victorian skirts of studio prettiness conceal the very thin basis of commercial creation.

But lest we go too far in our now somewhat embittered enthusiasm for this most pathetic and much abused art, we might listen to the gentle rebuke of a man of the theatre who has made a genuine attempt to study the problems of cinema: "If you esteem the cinema and believe it to be an art, you must be prepared to discover that art among the commercial films of Elstree and of Hollywood, calculated to appeal to the public at large." Professor Nicholls does, however, admit that "Trivial themes, unimaginative direction, stupid voluptuousness, cheap vulgarity, incompetent performances are common, and excessively rare are the occasions when a vital thought and a moving interpretation stir us to an emotion of strength and vitality."

Of the films which I list for review this month I find none with that power of direct appeal to which we can apply the word greatness. Easily the most interesting by reason of its subject matter and the importance of its direction is "Ah Wilderness!" Clarence Brown's version of Eugene O'Neill's comedy of recollection. Brown, it will be remembered, directed Garbo in "Flesh and the Devil," and produced "Anna Christie" with the same actress in the title role. Not having seen the stage play nor having read the script I was well on the way towards having my critical faculties suspended while watching this film. The very sure touch of a great dramatist given to a theme of ambitious adolescence standing bravely on the threshold of new worlds and placed in the perspective of his family makes for a charming and quietly drawn series of warm human portraits, universal and immediately recognisable. And this the film certainly contained. Eric Linden as Richard gave a most sensitive performance; awkward, gauche and poignantly ridiculous, but with head proudly in the air amongst his dreams, aspirations and ideals. In the scenes with his more timorous sweetheart he managed to convey the whole lyricism of first love with a rare sincerity. The other members of the family were scarcely less sincerely portrayed—Lionel Barrymore's father, Spring Byington as the mother, Aline McMahon's Lil, Beery's Sid, while Frank Albertson, Mickey Rooney and Bonita Granville were quite in the picture..

The implications of the theme would encourage lengthy comment, but it



should be at least noted how the relations between Richard and his family were nicely established. The reaction of age to the enthusiasms of youth are too often sweepingly cast aside, and the capacity for response too often doubted to the frequent precipitation of tragedy. Richard is bound to his family and he will only reach the fullness of his powers when he recognises that fact. Consequently we may expect such a result when the mutual respect of parent and child is secured at the end of the film.

With regard to the production, it is the old case of uncertain compromise. It can scarcely be considered as successful a venture as Vidor's work on "Street Scene," for instance, and at times it was possible to see the straining after effects of cinema, a certain admission of filmic guilt. Nevertheless for its lovely performances and sympathetic handling a film of much merit.

"Kind Lady" was a revelation of the art of Aline McMahon, exercised to be sure in an exceptional film, but even so, sustaining and moulding that film to its very last moment. The solitary Miss Herries befriending a down and out artist and his sick wife soon finds that she has taken a serpent to her bosom. At the mercy of an unscrupulous gang of crooks and with her will power being slowly broken down, she finally wins the battle of wits in the face of the evil forces at work against her. From the very opening the atmosphere is skilfully created as the toils close in about the main protagonist. The extraordinary poise and sense of the macabre displayed by Miss McMahon seems to educe this quality from the other players. There have been few more terrifying moments on the screen than that in which the remorseless silent faces close in around Miss Herries. Later as the suggested evil is evoked the mood is reminiscent of "Caligari," while yet managing to remain authentic. As the villains of the piece, Basil Rathbone and Dudley Digges gave their usual good performances.

"Tudor Rose," written and directed by Robert Stevenson, camera by Greenbaum, and art direction by Vetchinsky, has a no less imposing array of actors commissioned by Gaumont British to bring to life the atmosphere of intrigue of the troublous Tudor days. As a result we get an historical film good as historical films go. But there was one fatal mistake. We get so much that we are encouraged to ask for that little bit more which would make it a good film. A little of it went a long way, and I think for this reason that the tempo of cutting is one thing and the emotional rhythm another. Be sparing with your pretty pictures, shorten them, give a lot of them, and yet your rhythm may faint and the film become merely overweighted. The cutting must be determined by the continuity of feeling. Not by box-office compromise and popularity values—things external to the artist's work.

Theatricalism reared its head at times. Shots aroused attention that was stifled by the sequence, thereby relegating them to the class of "pretties." Art direction sometimes swallowed the players. Yet the film had its exquisite moments—the childish delight of Edward at the tumblers, the execution of

Guilford Dudley, Thomas Seymour's (Leslie Perrins) quarrel with his brother. Nova Pilbeam justifies the claims made for her and can add this film's success to the laurels she won in "Little Friend."

"Under Two Flags" is good box-office, and good background for hand-holding couples in the cinema. Ronald Coleman, wreathed in nostalgic memories of "Beau Geste" parades once more against the desert background, to-day accompanied on the sound track by waltzed version of the Kashmiri Love Song, and the most awful inchoate sound since "Captain Blood." Spectacular direction involves mass parades of men backwards and forwards between two forts. Massed Arab attacks. Two heroines and two heroes giving what might be called an ephemeral quadrangle situation. It was very well acted by Ronald Coleman, Victor McLaglen, Claudette Colbert and Rosalind Russell.

It was at one time a matter of pride that the camera had achieved mobility. Seeing its use in the Ouida opus one could only hope that Divine wrath would send speedy paralysis again. Technique has almost reached journey's end in a cinema that has nothing to say. What is being said might as adequately be expressed in any other medium, or as distinctively.

Film-goers should note that "Fury" at the Capitol and "Shape of Things to Come" at the Stephen's Green Cinema are definitely worth a visit. The former is directed by Fritz Lang, the brilliant German film-maker of "Siegfried," "Metropolis," "M," "Liliom" and "Dr. Mabuse." For his first Hollywood film, acclaimed by competent critics as an unusual success, he prepared his own scenario. "Things to Come," while less of a directorial achievement, has brought the work of many artists who are masters in their own sphere to the service of the screen—Vincent Korda, Moholy Nagy, H. G. Wells and Arthur Bliss.

LIAM O LAOGHAIRE

# BOOK SECTION

## ART AND SOCIETY

It was almost axiomatic with the last century that with the growth of knowledge, the progress of scientific investigation, history would cease to be a universal and wasteful muddling-through and become an ordered progress along lines planned with scientific wisdom. Of course that would seem to be the logical goal of humanist learning ; but whether it is that humanism itself is a blind alley or has for the nonce taken the wrong turning, looking round Europe at the moment, the muddling is more muddled than ever. Now, to my mind, the renaissance centuries that tried to add to the virtues of Christian humanism, the virtues also of Greek humanism, gave to modern Europe a root philosophy of inconsistencies. Christian humanism had enough to do to maintain the virtue of loving one's brother, of humility, of consideration for the weak and the afflicted in the face of ordinary unhallowed human passions without idealising those very passions. In this idealisation is the root of individualism, of Darwinian survival-of-the-fittest ethics, of capitalism black as Moscow could ever see it. Had the secular humanism triumphed early we would now be living in a more or less untroubled state as a limited plutocracy. Certainly stability can be achieved by calling religion and all art that does not subserve the united front, "the opiate of the people" and throwing it overboard. That is one way of planning history scientifically. It is the way of the Soviets.

Mr. Herbert Read's latest book, *Art and Society*,\* is an attempt on his part to do for art, what *Das Kapital* is to do for history. He says : " Perhaps for the first time in history the artist has become conscious of the springs of his inspiration, is in conscious control of such inspiration, and able to direct it to the specific course of art, which is the deepening of our sense of the total reality of existence, and, in a genetic sense, the further development of the human consciousness." Well, that should do away with all muddling in the future, with impressionism, cubism, dadaism, leaving as the final art-form what we now know as surrealism or super realism. The surrealist "is profoundly conscious of that lack of organic connection which is characteristic of the modern world." He sees the fundamental fault in the economic structure—of society and begins as a Marxist revolutionary. André Breton has found dialectical materialism. Now, the logic proceeds, the Marxist sees society as a whole, ergo, so must the surrealist, and to do so he seeks to transmute the "two seemingly contradictory states, dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality, a super reality, so to speak." (André Breton's *First Manifesto of 1924*). As Mr. Read himself admits, this transmutation of dream and reality has played a part, limited no doubt in Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe by their ignorance of the Surrealist Manifesto, in the work of some great artists. in fact, this quotation would serve as a definition for all great art. The dream being the irrationality recognised by Plato; emanations from the real only dimly apprehended ; that which distinguishes poetry from prose. But looking to the definition, in the light of our experience of surrealist work, it would seem that they are not content with proportioning the reality and the fantasy as it is in life, but must needs have it all dream, with the dissociation that is common to the dream. The surrealist in practice indulges deliberately in a form of paranoia, which in its uninhibited state is classed as a mental disease. In fact, it has

---

\* *Art and Society* by Herbert Read. (Heinemann 10/-.)



been advanced that the work of the genuine paranoiac, is more valid than the work of the regrettably sane artist who induces the paranoia with difficulty for purposes of composition. Not, of course, denying that there may be some law governing the dissociation of images in this form of insanity. The point is that such a law could have a merely minor relevance, referring, not to the whole mind, but to an aberration.

Mr. Read is dissatisfied with the Societ, hoping to find there "an abandonment of the debased ideals of Capitalist art and a return to creative realities." But not so; "in actual practice the most fatal of procedures has been adopted: the imposition of an intellectually predetermined conception of what art should be in a socialist community," a conception derived from "the general nature of popular art." In reality the ideological basis of surrealism, or indeed of any of the innumerable "isms" that have risen of late years and pretended to compass the whole of human experience, is in the modern tendency to see life from one aspect, the aspect of a specialist in one department. Surrealism is the counterpart in art of psychoanalysis. And if it has value, or any of these have value, it will be in the enrichment of the elements thus emphasised in the main current of what after generations will call great art; that is if this, which we so optimistically call a transition period in European civilisation, is really so and not the prelude to a final breakdown.

Surrealism cannot be identified with Marxism except in so far as it is an attempt to find a substitute for that which Marx jettisoned, to add a "spiritual" and yet "progressive" complement to historic materialism. And is western capitalist civilisation any less in the same need?

The human mind will inevitably seek for something beyond reality. Romanticism was, in this light, the complement of intellect in an age which sought to make reason paramount, a realisation of the necessity to supplant the "beyond" of supernatural religion, with another "beyond" of imaginative conception. The same need produced the Bergsonian intuition, *sentiment de la vie*. Surrealism is in this tradition. Not that any of these "isms" and art theories and specialist philosophies, are valueless relatively; their fault and danger lies in their being overweening manifestations of individualism masquerading as universal philosophy. Also this, as Maritain points out: "There is a vital difference between concepts which are sought and concepts which are found."

But to return to Herbert Read. Actually the foregoing criticism is levelled at the final chapter of his book. Throughout a survey beginning with the first scratching on cave walls and ending with surrealism, functionalism and abstract art, he tries to see art in its relation to society, the status of the artist in society. In such a survey the author covers fields which are the proper province of the archaeologist, the anthropologist, the historian, none of which are exact sciences. Also through the necessity of covering such a vast field, the man who attempts such a survey is compelled into generalisations, which lay him open to attack from these particular angles. For instance, in the section "Christian Art in the North," he talks of Christianity spreading northward from its Mediterranean cradle; "Syrian motives were planted in the Ultima Thule of that world, in Northumbria and the Hebrides," encountering there a *genius loci* different from the southern, "darkness instead of light, cold instead of warmth, gloom instead of gladness" and an indigenous art "awesome and agitated" in character, an art, he says, "which we can most conveniently call Celtic." Thus religious art in the North became morbid, introspective, fanatical. He is speaking of the "great proselytising period from

the 10th to the 13th century. Now, Celtic art, in no way, as known to scholarship or archaeology corresponds to the description of "awesome and agitated," unless we still accept a conception of Celtic art, common to 19th century literary criticism and based on Macpherson's romanticism. In fact, Mr. Read avoids altogether any consideration of the first progress of Christianity northward, the Christian civilisation of Ireland in the 6th and 7th centuries and its subsequent spread eastward.

His deduced theory, a theory by no means uncommon, that "whenever an ideological movement . . . is transplanted into a region of different climatic and material conditions, that movement is completely transformed," does not at all follow from the character of Early Irish Christian Art. The art of the "ideological movement" arriving, formal, stylistic, symbolical, found in Ireland an art entirely sympathetic. The art of the earlier Christians was still imbued with a Judaic attitude towards the realistic image and prejudice in favour of the symbol. Irish Christian art, whether consciously or not, remained stylistic and symbolical. Mr. Read has probably Teutonic countries with German, Gothic, and later the Reformation, in mind. But the word 'Celtic' is misplaced here, and the 'simplification' is too sweeping not to leave room for innumerable objections.

One can expect that Mr. Read's book will be widely read and add to the reputation he has earned with *The Meaning of Art* and *Art Now*. Lack of space has compelled me to concentrate on his final conclusions at the expense of the substructure, which is interesting, not at all academic, and courageous. The book is excellently produced.

EDWARD SHEEHY

## THE IRISH SHELF

### THE I.R.B. AND 1916

TOM CLARKE AND THE IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT. By Louis N. Le Roux.  
(*Talbot Press*. 5s.)

The first of the Seven Signatories to the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, 1916, is perhaps the least known, especially to the younger generation. He has now found a biographer in Mr. Le Roux, author of the *Life of Patrick Pearse*. The work is in two parts; its sub-title might more accurately be given as the history of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The first part deals with Tom Clarke's origin—he sprang from mixed Protestant and Catholic stock, his father served in the British Army and he himself was born in a garrison station in the Isle of Wight—and his early years, spent in Dungannon. Emigrating to the United States, he volunteered there for "dangerous work in England," returned, escaped detection, owing to having been temporarily "lost" to the secret service by reason of a shipwreck, but was soon arrested for his part in the 'dynamite plot,' receiving the savage sentence of life imprisonment, fifteen years of which he served (1883-1898). The most vivid part of this book is the account, taken from Clarke's *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, of his experiences in Milbank and Chatham convict prisons. Like Wilfred Macartney's recent exposé of contemporary conditions in British jails (a damning indictment of the whole vile system, which our egregious Censorship board has just banned) Clarke's struggle to retain sanity under the soul-breaking régime shows the conquest of matter by a dauntless mind. While many of his comrades became broken in body and spirit, Tom Clarke, determined not to give in, set up a counter-discipline of his own to meet the prison one, taught himself shorthand, framed a code for communication with

his fellows, managed to get in papers from the outside, which he relayed, ran a prison paper, *The Irish Felon*, achieved wonders, the story of which, as here recounted, refreshes one's spirit as does any gallant victory over tyranny. He certainly proved once again that stone walls do not necessarily a prison make. But he must have had many a dark hour for all that: those prison years left their mark of premature age, and on his mind a searing scar such as appears on the limbs of those Russian politicals, released at the revolution, the eternal mark of the chains. Tom Clarke's last words to his wife, a few hours before his execution: "I am glad it's a soldier's death I am getting . . . I had enough of imprisonment," reveal much. This silent, quiet little man had passed through hell.

Yet so little does prison "cure" rebels, that Tom Clarke, after fifteen years of it, on his release went on quietly as if nothing had happened, with his revolutionary activities at home, in America and again back in Ireland, incessantly, tirelessly, hopefully in spite of rebuffs, of continual struggles with poverty. He became a key person (Michael Davitt had years before sworn him into the I.R.B.) linking up many who might otherwise not have made contact. One may truly say that everyone who counted for anything in the Irish revolutionary world of those days passed at one time or other in and out of his little tobacconist and newspaper shop in Great Britain Street.

The story of the I.R.B. and its many ramifications to which the author devotes much of the latter part of his work, though it shows evidence of much industrious research, is less interesting. Organisations are never as good material for their biographers as are human beings. Mr. Le Roux has had access to sources not hitherto tapped: at times indeed he would appear to hold a brief for the I.R.B. Hence he sometimes minimizes other forces that went to the making of Easter Week, paying little attention to the rise of the Citizen Army, under Connolly, giving the I.R.B. the credit, wholly undeserved, of initiating *Fianna Eireann*, which belongs to Constance Markievicz. The story of the kidnapping ('detention' he calls it) of Connolly by the I.R.B. still needs clearing up. Mr. Le Roux blames both sides impartially for the confusion and disaster following MacNeill's countermanding orders on Easter Sunday: the setting up of a figurehead and keeping him in the dark was fatal and "broke the back of the rebellion." Secret organizations are given overmuch to the policy of not letting the right hand know what the left is about—of giving each different orders and so paralyzing action.

H. S. S.

THE COMPOSITION BOOKE OF CONOUGHT. Transcribed by A. Martin Freeman. (*Stationery Office, 7s. 6d.*).

For the student of the Elizabethan period of Connacht history the Composition Book of that province forms an important source. It is likewise of importance to the toponymist and the investigator of Irish land tenures. The province was not completely subjected to the Crown and laws of England until late in the reign of Elizabeth. The final stages in the project of subjection, culminating in the famous "Composition" of 1585, were initiated in 1575 by the Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sidney, and completed some ten years later by Sir John Perrott. From the outset, Perrott appears to have set his heart on the achievement of the Composition with the Connacht chieftains. He induced them to enter into agreements by which they were released from the obligation of an uncertain cess, and in return were to pay quit-rent to the Queen. They were to abandon their Irish titles and the right to exact their old customary dues from their tenants. Instead, they were to be confirmed



in the fixed possession of their lands, and to receive money rents. All were to hold direct from the Queen and become subject to English law: there was to be one people under the Crown. Inquisitions were held to discover the amount of land, by whom it was held, from whom, and under what services. Indentures were then drawn up between Perrott and the "lords spirituall and temporall Chieftains gentles freeholders farmers and inhabitants" of the different districts in the province (which at that time included Clare).

The original enrolments of the Indentures and Inquisitions, known collectively as the Composition Book of Connacht, perished in 1922 with the destruction of the Four Courts. A copy made about 1700 by one John Moore is still preserved in the British Museum. Mr. Freeman has prepared his transcript from this copy. It is to be regretted that the commendably high standard set by previous editors of texts for the Irish Manuscripts Commission has not been adhered to in this instance. The work has been literally thrown at historical students without the least semblance of an Index or an apology for its absence. Both the Inquisitions and the Indentures swarm with place and personal names, but apparently each purchaser of the volume is expected to construct his own Index.

In the present state of historical research in Ireland it does seem somewhat amateurish to publish un-indexed an important source-work.

SÉAMUS PENDER

THE SWEET CRY OF HOUNDS. By E. OE. Somerville and Martin Ross. (*Methuen*. 7s. 6d.)

To say that the illustrations by the authoress in this book are better than the printed words is not to say that the book is altogether a bad book. In places it is a good book. At times it is a mean book, while here and there it descends to the level of ordinary, old-maidenly nonsense, pure and simple. I use the last two words charitably in their basic sense.

Some of the plates seem to me to have real merit and feeling, while others are obviously ludicrous. But I am no judge of pictures. The prose style is for the most part windy, like a hunting horn improperly blown, and the idiotic fairy story about the little girl on whom the neighbours put the name of Moira Cloca-Dearg," (and that means, in Irish, Mary of the Red Cloak, and the way you'd say it in English is 'Cloaka-Dharrig')," is merely stage-Irish deplorably staged. So much for a general opinion.

I have said that in places the book is mean. Perhaps "catty" would have been a better word to use. It can be best expressed by saying that there is a feeling that the authoress takes delight in caricaturing the peasantry a trifle maliciously. As I understand it, the peasantry and the small farming class are and always have been the main contributors to the success of hunting in Ireland. The impression conveyed may be due merely to her obvious and old-fashioned prejudices. But there is a danger that the airing of such prejudices may lead well-meaning people into suspecting that she is willing to exploit her talent in order to sell a pot-boiler to a public ignorant of the facts.

Though the general standard of the prose will ensure that the book will never do any serious harm to her country's reputation, there are passages studded here and there throughout the work which have true beauty. I refer particularly to the scenic descriptions. Miss Somerville has a keen appreciation of the beauties of "her chosen corner of Southern Ireland," coupled with a boundless enthusiasm for horses, hounds and the art of hunting the fox. The pity is that she cannot discover in some of her human characters a share of the nobility and sagacity which she so generously attributes to her dogs.

FLANNAN O'FLAHERTY

## OTHER PLACES

## TROUBLED EUROPE

SPAIN IN REVOLT. By Harry Gannes and Theodore Repard. (*Gollancz*. 5s.).  
 THE NAZI CONSPIRACY IN SPAIN. By the Editor of the Brown Book of the Hitler Terror. (*Gollancz*. 5s.).

In this brace of Gollancz's, the propagandist sledge-hammer is somewhat overworked and this must be inevitable if books on Spain are to be turned out at their present rate. *Spain in Revolt* is not the best summary of the social, political and economic origins of the civil war, yet for the student who wishes to miss nothing, it serves to clarify a point here and a point there that perusal of other works may have left in doubt. The map and the glossaries of prominent names and of parties constitute a very necessary piece of illumination to those whose familiarity with Spain dates from July 17th, 1936. The propagandist note of such books is made evident by the absence of any attempt at a military appraisal of the situation and its probable outcome.

*Nazi Conspiracy*, in content, is somewhat specialized and the reproduction on sixteen full-page plates of incriminating documents are of interest only to those who, even if moderately familiar with German, are prepared to struggle through closely typed documents in that language. Nevertheless the case is made to the effect that German penetration of Spain is of long-maturing design, beginning in 1915, and attaining to a highly organized degree of infiltration and espionage in 1936. In that this type of *Auslands Organisation* is actually being or is likely to be duplicated in many another country, including very possibly our own, the evidence accumulated assumes considerable interest. The book contains a chapter of *up-to-the-minute* interest entitled "Storm over Morocco."

L. J. R.

ZERO HOUR. By Richard Freund. (*Methuen*. 10/6.).

FOREIGNERS AREN'T FOOLS. By Christopher Hollis. (*Longmans*. 5s.).

Freund has focussed his eyes on trouble in the shape of impending war anywhere and we do not envy him the quite devastating and nightmarish discoveries he has made and now discloses. His general summing up of the danger points and where initiating clashes might be looked for is perhaps the ablest we have read and his unravelling of the intricacies of diplomatic alignments seems to the lay mind almost uncanny. Here is no mere sensationalism or propaganda and the book may be confidently recommended. Whether this will come as solace or added affliction, it should be said that the author sees events through the old and tried (we had hoped, abandoned) methods of balance of power and encirclement and secret agreement and *not*, as fright up to recently seemed to have made certain, as ideological groupings in two opposed camps.

Mr. Hollis's valuable monograph has already established its worth. Under the guise of mere conversational exchanges between an Englishman and in rotation, an Italian, a German, a Frenchman, a Russian, a Japanese and an American, he presents us what is really a profound study of world affairs as directed or impinged upon by the countries to which these gentlemen belong. He attains a degree of sympathy and impartiality that is surprising, yet if one went "all out" and did not regard bias as a bugbear, it should be easy for example, to weaken the Italian's defence of his country's action in Abyssinia. For the young or for the man-in-the-street, the book provides a useful introduction to the world's political problems, but to the politically-minded, there is not much that is new except the manner of presentation.

L. J. ROSS

## POETRY AND DRAMA

THE EMPEROR HEART. Laurence Whistler. (London: *Heinemann*, 5s. net.).

Laurence Whistler is a good poet whom I have not previously read and one whom it is a pleasure and a thrill to read. He has the four marks of the true poet, passion, sincerity, charm, and technique, and with these he has another distinguishing mark—not all his poems are good. Better a few good poems in a book than a volume of mediocre ones, and better perhaps a disturbing line in a quiet poem than a verse top-full of images.

Lovers are no more than the instant joy and sorrow

They feel. A bright match carried in a catacomb.

A length of fiery being by the clock.

They are not even lasting as their bones.

Think upon stones.

This music is successful with a dying fall.

Too often the clever poet is only clever, the religious only religious, the one with too much intellect, the other with too much restraint for passion; but, Laurence Whistler, while clever and religious is not afraid of the hot wind of passion or of using an old-fashioned word like Love without a sneer, or a genuflection to the Deity.

Perhaps the most charming and the most unexpected section of this book is the "Four Inscriptions," which come like the ghost of a rose into this graceless age. One of the most pleasing of these is "Written on a window pane at Campion Hall, Oxford":

You who read this fickle page,  
Illustrated by the sun,  
Scribbled by the shower's rage,  
Altering as the minutes run,  
Think how alteration must  
All endeavours bring to dust,  
All that's mortal, man and house,  
And of mercy pray for us.

The Emperor Heart is decorated by Rex Whistler, and while in general I object passionately to illustrations of any kind in a book of poetry, these are so appropriate to the poems that they serve rather to increase the pleasure in a most pleasing book of poems.

THE AGAMEMNON OF AESCHYLUS. Translated by Louis MacNeice. (London: *Faber and Faber*. 5s. net.)

Mr. MacNeice's "Poems" published last year led us to look forward with interest to the publication of his translation of Aeschylus. Mr. MacNeice, however, is either too good a scholar to be a good poet or too good a poet to successfully adapt another man's work. However it is, this translation succeeds only in being dull and stiff; the lines do not run rhythmically, the very opening halting the tongue and the mind with its harsh unmusical periods:

The gods it is I ask to release me from this watch

A year's length now, spending my nights like a dog.

Such ungraceful opening jars the mind which had been expecting, perhaps, something lofty and beautiful.

It is perhaps the scholar in Mr. MacNeice that spoils the fine sonorous periods which the poet in him might have written—as Arnold might have said, the translation of Greek needs the mind of a Greek not that of a university professor.



Throughout the play there are those quarrelsome lines refusing to glide or even roar in rhythm through the ear :

From now on I will say that the gods, avenging men,

Look down from above on the crimes of earth.

Always disappointing the mind, tantalized here and there with a line of promise.

But these objections are not to the translation as a translation, but only to the poetry which has been lost. Finding the lines so difficult to read, I cannot appreciate how the Agamemnon would play, but look forward, nevertheless, to seeing it on some Dublin stage. Perhaps in the mouths of actors these awkward lines would take on the dignity and beauty they lose in the reading.

DONAGH MAC DONAGH

THE INFERNAL MACHINE. By Jean Cocteau (trans. Carl Wildman). *Oxford Univ. Press*, 7s. 6d.).

Cocteau has tried his hand at many different theatrical styles in turn, generally with a Midas-touch of success, and not the least valuable part of this book is Mr. Wildman's summary of the aims of this writer, guiding him in his ceaseless experimentation which has often earned for him the epithet of *poseur*. Certainly one never knew what he might try next. However his peculiar poetic style—blending inextricably fact and fancy has always remained and is as fully to be seen in this play as it was in *Orphée* (done by the Dublin Drama League last May). I know no writer who can handle the fantastic so matter-of-factly nor can transmute mere triviality into mystery so simply. At times the dialogue is positively banal, though always stage-effective, yet the spirit of the play remains unaffected, its mysterious beauty unclouded. Always, however, one is conscious of Cocteau's visual sense—scene, altitude and speech blend constantly in the text, being all governed by his clear poetic vision, a vision which "comes across" perfectly to anyone "wishing to believe, not understand," as the translator remarks. This play cannot exist until it is staged as seen by the author—it is a perfect *pièce-de-théâtre* and not to be judged on a purely literary basis, excellent writing though it is.

The "infernal machine" is the relentless destiny mapped out for Oedipus by the gods whose agents are the Sphinx and Anubis (and the suggestive handling and definite characterisation of these is masterly) though Greek fatalism is made to yield to faith in humanity—the modern soft-hearted touch. As in *Orphée*, the author handles an ancient Greek myth in an entirely fresh and sincere manner, bringing home the universal quality of the legend by many modern touches and humanising it also by a personal coloration which is implied as one reads rather than driven home by eccentricity. Every act contains something of this coloration, this Cocteau variation of the conventional—the phantom sequence, the Sphinx and Anubis passages in Act 2, the appearance of Anubis and the mirror frame and the drunk in Act 3, and especially the last two pages covering the reappearance of the dead Jocasta. Every character, no matter how small, lives and act is linked to act in masterly fashion.

Mr. Wildman is to be congratulated on the smoothness of his translation, while the format of the book is so neatly sober as to be surprising—Cocteau, after all, is . . . Cocteau.

SEÁN Ó MEADHRA

## BIOGRAPHY

G. K. CHESTERTON: A PORTRAIT. By W. R. Titterton. (*Browne and Nolan*. 5s.).

In the first pages of his "Portrait," Mr. Titterton confesses to the hope that he will be the first, "in point of time," of the host of Boswells who would assuredly be forthcoming to perpetuate the name and fame of that second Doctor Johnson—G.K.C. A dangerous confession, which rivets attention on the whole modern fashion and fever of writing in haste, and repenting (or failing to repent !) at leisure ; and which—since there can no more be a plurality of Boswells than there can be of Johnsons or Chestertons—invites almost naively in advance the odium of comparison.

But for all that, and for all its haste-begotten defects, Mr. Titterton's book is good. It is rapid, vivid, and sincere ; the work of an experienced and competent journalist who knew his Chesterton better than most, and who was and is a whole-hearted and enthusiastic Chestertonian.

And Mr. Titterton justifies his enthusiasm. The Chesterton of common knowledge is in his book ; the G.K.C. who, in an age when journalists were journalists and not penny-a-headliner hacks, was foremost amongst them all—brilliant, versatile, humorous and all-sincere, the redoubtable champion of lost (or losing) and right causes. And the Chesterton who was so much more, and greater than, a journalist, is here ; the man of serious purpose and achievement, who, whether as poet, essayist, biographer, or mere commentator, was the full peer of his giant contemporaries—of Belloc, Shaw, Wells, Bennett and the rest.

The special merit, however, of Mr. Titterton's "Portrait," lies in its more personal and intimate touches, which reveal to us a Chesterton very different from the great and rollicking figure of common knowledge or acceptance ; a man of few, and clear, and consistently-maintained convictions and beliefs ; of childlike faith and vast simplicities ; of deep, and diffident, and almost holy humility. Of this essential Chesterton Mr. Titterton has a very special understanding ; for he, like G.K.C., was an English convert to Catholicism ; and Catholicism—robust, pre-Reformation, mediaeval Catholicism—was at once the predestined end and the lifelong explanation of the man Chesterton.

Mr. Titterton, finally, gives a very full account of Chesterton's activities and zeal in the cause of Distributism ; that social philosophy and system, based on the encyclical "*Rerum Novarum*," which holds the middle way between Capitalism and Socialism, and the end of which, Mr. Titterton assures us, is by no means yet.

A most readable book, admirably turned out. Both the author and the publishers are to be congratulated.

PETER O'DONOVAN

## BUDDING BEACONSFIELD

YOUNG MR. DISRAELI. By Elswyth Thane. (*Constable*, 7s. 6d. net).

To most Irish people—or so I believe—Benjamin Disraeli is slightly repellant. In appearance he is too suave, too sticky, too much "come into my parlour." Everything about him seems to have been summarised by his gift of primroses and his arrogantly submissive letters to Victoria. His whole life looks like a search for Jacob's ladder.

The author of this novel, Miss Elswyth Thane, who is already favourably known to the reading public for *The Tudor Wench*, is to be congratulated upon making the young Disraeli somewhat more attractive. She is as accurate

as the authors of the Monypenny-Buckle *Life*; but how much more life she has managed to infuse into her words! She very rightly says "no novelist could possibly improve on the drama of Disraeli's life exactly as he lived it." George Arliss discovered that some time ago, and thus re-created a Victorian legend. This excellent novel re-creates not a legend but a life. It is not the Disraeli who created Empresses that Miss Thane has revived; it is the young man who desired to follow the literary pursuits of his father. He is a lawyer's clerk, aged 20 years, who believes he can write novels. He does write novels, excellent novels; but in the interim he has his financial misfortunes and his love affairs. It is the love affair with Mary Anne, whom he married, that is the emotional leavening in this novel, and no more delicately-told love story has ever been re-told. That it is a real story—not merely an emanation of the author's experiences put into a synthesis—will make it all the better in many eyes. Here, in fact, is the young impecunious Disraeli of *Coningsby*, the prophet of Tory Democracy in England, the analyst of England's "two nations." As a re-creation of early Victorian life, *Young Mr. Disraeli* is comparable with young Mr. Disraeli's own novels, and it might be included in the next edition of the *Young England Novels*. Whether a novel of this kind, with its notes and bibliography, is biography or fiction the reader must judge.

A. E. M.

## FICTION

FAMINE. By Liam O'Flaherty. (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.).

To review great books is an easy task; to write a critique a difficult one. All that is necessary in the case of *Famine* is to say that it is O'Flaherty's best novel. It is tremendous. It is biblical. It is the best Irish historical novel to date.

A small actor sometimes finds a suitable part and gives a good performance; when that happens we see what happens when a great actor sweeps us off our feet in a part that is suited to his genius. O'Flaherty is the great actor in this role. The Irish Famine is a perfect subject for his broad, dramatic, powerful energies. He has here not merely a dynamic character, or a character driven mad by some internal passion—which has hitherto been his favourite subject—but many characters that become enlarged by their association with a cataclysm. In the best sense this is the perfect proletarian novel, because the balance is held between the development of the individual (which the proletarian writer usually neglects) and the power of inexorable circumstance, such as the forms of contemporary society, to mould and limit him, and create a persistent tension about him.

But there is much more here than a chance collusion between a man of great talent and his ideal subject. O'Flaherty has worked on this subject as he has never worked before, outside his short stories. His will has been engaged by his imagination. He has set out a number of characters, this time, and given due space and attention to them all. When the Famine strikes Black Valley it strikes many homes, and it affects the cabins and the priest's house, and the Big House, and the Parson's house, and it affects Dublin and London, the O'Connellites and the British Government alike. Types of all these come upon the scene. Technically, this profusion brings one or two faults—the historical comment, for example, breaks the mood; and that brings in, too, the "as we have seen" style of the historian. But there is something to offset that—a pity, a heartrending tenderness unusual in O'Flaherty's novels. When the boy Michael is buried and they come back to his cabin to see the old wrinkled



pair of brogues in the clevvy, or when Mary leaves, at last, for America, leaving the old folk to their inevitable fate, and the old man, saying nothing, draws his calloused palms down the cheeks of his little grandchild for the last time, there is a compression of emotion to be found only in the greatest books. And with that there is all O'Flaherty's realism, his keen memory of intimate life, his knowledge of the psychology of the people. With the land-agent Chadwick one may quarrel. A touch of that same universal tenderness in his case would have been welcome. Inhuman as his kind were they remain human beings.

S. O. F.

THE DU MAURIERS. By Daphne du Maurier. (*Gollancz*, 10s. 6d.).

There is an irresistible glamour about this family that makes the history of their lives from the departure to France in 1810 of Mary Anne Clarke, mistress of the Duke of York, to the marriage of the lovable Kicky du Maurier—the author of *Trilby*, as pleasant, and sweet, and romantic as an old tune on a harpsichord. The flavour of *Peter Ibbetson*—adorable book, one of the most adorable books about childhood ever written—seems to spread itself over the whole record, as if George du Maurier had soaked in the atmosphere of all his ancestors. Except, perhaps, Mary Anne Clarke herself, who was simply a very lively, plucky, daring, sluttish Hoxton street-woman. Her spirit, and her witty tongue, alone can have benefited her children. (The judge at the trial in which she gave evidence against the Duke, had leaned down and with a sidelong glance at the court, said, “And under whose *protection* are you, now, Mrs. Clarke?” “I thought, milord,” she clipped back, “that I was under yours?”) But there was no royal blood in the veins of the du Maurier's, for Mary Anne had not met the Duke until her children were quite grown. Who was the father of Ellen—her daughter—nobody knows, however. “It could have been anybody,” says the family biographer.

The portion dealing with George (Kicky) and Isobel, who married Clement Scott, and Gygy, who was the rake of the family, will please most readers, though Louis Mathuring du Maurier is a character who would have made a novel in himself. Into that later period come a host of famous figures—Jimmy Whistler, Leighton, Watts, Mark Lemon of *Punch*, Fantin Latour, and so on, all evoking again the faint musk of *il y a longtemps*, as pleasant; all as much to be regretted as the lost garden at Plassy that is like a symbol of this lost world of which the du Mauriers were the creators and the types.

F. D.

## FILM

STAR TURN. René Clair. (*Chatto and Windus*. 7/6.)

“The publisher who thought of having this tale translated into English must have been in an indulgent mood the day he first picked it up.” So the author anticipating his would-be critics. In the preface, speaking of his early work, he says that “nothing of what he wrote at that time appeared to him to be worth finishing.” The present novel written in 1925 deals with the plight of a movie star whose personality is possessed by each of his film creations and who finally driven to create God on the screen, inaugurates a religious revival under the auspices of big business.

The novel has very little justification for its revival other than the interest that attaches to its author as a maker of films. It is inconsequentially clever and deadly boring, dated with the marks of its period. Good work that is

incidentally avant-garde is unaffected by time. Not so "Star Turn," which fails as satire, humour or light philosophy. We are grateful that M. Clair has taken to the less facile medium of cinema with some success.

LIAM O LAOGHAIRE

FILMS AND THE LABOUR PARTY. Paul Rotha. (*Labour Party, Transport House, London.*)

In this reprint of a lecture given to a Labour conference at Edinburgh, the author points out the vast propaganda value of the cinema and how the interests and viewpoints of its commercial masters are upheld. He touches on the new school of documentary film orientated towards a new scale of values based on the lives of those engaged in working for the benefit of the community. He points out the need for the creation of a consciousness of position and rights and of a co-operative understanding which may be served by the cinema. An excellent little introduction to potentialities of film so far little known here in Ireland.

L. O'L.

## IRISH NATIONAL ASSURANCE CO. Ltd.

(TARIFF)

(TARIFF)

### BUSINESS TRANSACTED

CLAIMS  
PAID

ENGINEERING  
GLASS  
MOTOR  
BURGLARY  
ACCIDENT  
LIFE  
FIRE

EXCEED  
£600,000

*Instruct your Broker, Agent, Solicitor  
or Bank Manager, to place your  
Insurance with this Company.*

Head Office:

COLLEGE GREEN, DUBLIN

'Phone: 22308 (2 lines)

Telegrams: URRADAS

C.P.S.

## OUR ADVERTISERS



*are supporting*

# IRELAND TO-DAY

KINDLY GIVE THEM  
YOUR PREFERENCE

Have  
Your  
Books  
Rebound



at



The RIVERSIDE BINDERY, Ltd.

67A PEARSE STREET, DUBLIN

TELEPHONE DUBLIN 61057



## THE MONTH IN RETROSPECT. (16 DEC.—15 JAN.)

At Dublin housing enquiry the Lord Mayor stated that the Corporation could do little unless contractors and workers speeded up output. Corporation proposed to purchase for housing site Ardilaun estate of 400 acres at Clontarf. Eighty Bray unemployed march during night to Rathdrum to apply for home assistance. Dublin omnibus workers reject proposed new agreement with company. Derry omnibus workers decided instead of striking to "work to rule." 1,500 tenants on Belfast estate began rent strike. Vocational students on Aran Islands held exhibition in Kilronan. C. K. Kirwan in "G.K.'s Weekly" stated there were only 53 communists in Saorstát, but that there was grave danger from north-east. Dr. George O'Brien in "Studies" estimated population of England in 2035 as only 4,426,000.

Minister for Finance replying to "ill-informed complaints" defended administration of Road Fund. Timothy Sullivan appointed Chief Justice and Conor Maguire appointed President of High Court. Lynn Doyle appointed member of Censorship of Publications Board. Further crux in election of Sligo mayor. Dispute between Civil Service staff organisations and Government on arbitration issue. Stated at Clare County Council that outside Gaeltacht, Government grants would not be given for thatched cottages. Stated at application for licences in Dublin that "secret drinking" at dances was on the increase.

B. B. C. refuse Irish radio programmes from Belfast on ground that there were "negligible number of Gaelic speakers." Headmaster of St. Patrick's Protestant Cathedral grammar school stated that "they were rather proud of their achievements in Irish." William Griffin, American publisher, given Freedom of Limerick, and presented painting of Gerald Griffin; suggested at Cork that Blarney Stone be sent to New York for 1939 World's Fair. French government gave large number of books to Irish Folklore Commission; Director of Commission, Seamus O Duilearga, to lecture in Germany. Annual report of National Library showed number of readers 63,000. Annual report of Film Censor reveals that more British than American films were rejected; only one Irish and six Continental films were submitted. New broadcast programmes for schools begun from Radio Athlone. "On Another Man's Wound," by Ernie O'Malley, criticised by Kilkenny old I.R.A. Rutherford Mayne's "Bridgehead" given Casement award for best Irish play of 1934-35. Hugh Hunt, Abbey Theatre, to produce "Macbeth" for Oxford University Dramatic Society; Abbey Company to play at Cambridge. Dr. N. Mansergh gave series of talks from Radio Athlone in defence of democracy. Exhibitions in Dublin of Polish art, paintings by Marion King and modern world architecture.

Anglo-Irish Coal-Cattle agreement renewed for 1937. Commercial treaty with Belgium renewed. New agreement with Germany will give greater ratio to Saorstát. Saorstát trade for year ended November £5,400,000 greater than for previous year. Government minimum prices for 1937 and 1938 wheat increased by 3s. a barrel. French investigations into Arigna minerals showed further development not practicable. Minister received deputation of cinema interests on question of foreign control. First sod cut for new £50,000 jute factory in Waterford. Crowds cheer first direct shipment of fat cattle from Waterford to Germany. New sheet glass factory opened in Ringsend. Galway committee plan airport at Oranmore. Shorthorn breeders held congress in Cork. Homespun society held exhibition. Dispute between Retail Newsagents Association and "Irish Press."

President De Valera, returning from Zurich where he consulted eye specialist, had "informal discussions" with Mr. Malcolm McDonald, Secretary for the Dominions. Mr. Eden gave indefinite reply when asked in Commons if French defence guarantee extended to Saorstát. First Irish casualties in Spain. Christian Front published translation of Spanish primate's pastoral. Deputy Belton stated his mission to Spain was crowned with success, and Christian Front would assist insurgents with ambulances and supplies, giving special help to Gen. O'Duffy's Brigade. First ambulance blessed by Bishop of Thasos. Several hundred volunteers for the Brigade assembled at Passage, but ship failed to arrive. Small party left Dublin to join Madrid forces. Frank Ryan spoke from Radio Madrid. The Pope's appeal for peace broadcast from Radio Athlone. Col. Roosevelt, son of Theodore Roosevelt, on visit to Ireland. Netherlands colony in Dublin celebrate marriage of Princess Juliana. Dr. Karel Kestel replaces Major Paul Rizicka as Czecho-Slovakian Consul in Dublin.

Died: Major T. R. B. Seigne, well-known shot and fisherman.

Italian Bank closed owing to "freezing" of funds in Italy. Gorey leather workers decided to take church holidays instead of bank holidays. Bishop of Killala celebrated silver jubilee. Hunting in many parts. Widespread epidemic of influenza of mild character. Belfast police find arms dump. Omagh town hall refused to G.A.A. unless tricolour not displayed. Directed at Dundalk Courthouse that signs be painted in "Irish, which was the national language, and English which was the language used."

DENIS BARRY